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# **SOCIAL SAFETY NETS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMMES FOR THE PROVISION  
OF FOOD SECURITY IN BANGLADESH

BY  
**ISMAT MAHMUDA**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2015



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK



# SOCIAL SAFETY NETS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Poverty reduction programmes for the provision of food security in  
Bangladesh

by

Ismat Mahmuda



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

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## ENGLISH SUMMARY

This dissertation contributes to the present knowledge about poverty reduction in Bangladesh and focuses conceptually, theoretically and empirically on the role of social safety nets (SSNs) for food security of vulnerable. While development partners of the country identify Bangladesh as a “*success story*”, this study offers a critique of development measures and proposes that development should not to be measured only by economic growth (GDP, GNP or GNI p.c), industrialisation or modernisation, but as a process of expansion of peoples real freedom. Therefore, being critical in nature it focuses on four basic concepts of development: poverty, food security, gender and SSNs or poverty reduction programmes in general. Poverty is considered as an obstacle for development, food security an essential component of well-being, gender inequality a development barrier and SSNs as targeted development programmes. Focusing on these development concepts this research investigates the following question:

**How effective are social safety nets in improving livelihoods, food security and capabilities of poor distressed women in Bangladesh?**

Analytically, the thesis measures development by applying the capability approach of Amartya Sen as the overall theoretical framework. In addition the capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum is operationalised for analysing the gender aspect of development. The analytical structure explains the link between development and real freedom.

Empirically the research concentrates on two SSNs: The state funded and operated Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGD) and a donor funded Non-government organisation (NGO) operated programme Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR). Both SSNs work with the same objective (poverty reduction) and focuses on the deprived population (women) under different institutional backgrounds with distinct operational procedures. The empirical analysis explores the importance of women’s agency and ownership (real freedom) for well-being (development) by analysing and connecting the following specific questions:

1. How do SSNs plan and implement interventions to promote higher levels of food security?
2. What is the present food security status of women participating in VGD and which socio economic factors contribute to their food insecurity status?
3. What type of coping mechanisms do vulnerable women adapt in securing themselves with food during shock or crisis periods?



#### 4. How can innovative approaches make SSN's more effective?

The dissertation is article based. Four articles address the specific queries with four chapters discussing the background, theoretical framework and conceptualising the development strategies of Bangladesh. Overall the analytical, conceptual, empirical and theoretical contributions have important implications on designing poverty reduction programmes for development.



# DANSK RESUME

Denne afhandling bidrager til den nuværende viden om fattigdomsbekæmpelse i Bangladesh og fokuserer teoretisk, begrebsligt og empirisk på hvilken rolle sociale sikkerhedsnet (SSNs) spiller i forbindelse med at øge fødevaresikkerheden for fattige og udsatte. Mens udviklingspartnere kalder Bangladesh en "succeshistorie" anlægger denne afhandling et mere kritisk blik på forskellige udviklingstiltag. Udgangspunktet er at udvikling ikke kun skal måles som økonomisk vækst (BNP, BNP eller BNI pc ), industrialisering eller modernisering, men som en proces der bør føre til udvidelse af folks reelle frihed. Dette kritiske udgangspunkt leder til fire grundlæggende begreber, som afhandlingen fokuserer på: fattigdom, fødevaresikkerhed, køn og SSNs eller fattigdomsbekæmpelse i almindelighed. Fattigdom betragtes som en hindring for udvikling, fødevaresikkerhed som et væsentligt element der bidrager til øget velvære, ulighed mellem kønnene ansues som en hindring for udvikling og SSNs, som målrettede udviklingsprogrammer.

Disse udviklings begreber udgør en samlet ramme og leder til frem følgende problemstilling:

Hvor effektive er sociale sikkerhedsnet til at forbedre levevilkår, fødevaresikkerhed og fattige sårbare kvinders kapaciteter i Bangladesh?

Analytisk måles udvikling ved at anvende Amartya Sens kapacitets begreb (capability approach), som den overordnede teoretiske ramme. Desuden operationaliseres Martha Nussbaums udvidede kapacitetsbegreb til analyse af kønsaspektet. Den analytiske struktur forklarer sammenhængen mellem udvikling og reel frihed.

Det stats finansierede Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGD) og det donor finansierede ikke-statslige organisations (NGO) drevne program Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR). Begge SSNs opererer med samme formål (fattigdomsbekæmpelse) og har som målgruppe de dårligst stillede befolkningsgrupper (med fokus primært på kvinder) dog udfra forskellige institutionelle baggrunde og forskellige operationelle procedurer. Den empiriske analyse undersøger betydningen af kvinders handlefrihed (agency) og ejerskab (reel frihed) i forbindelse med trivsel (udvikling) og fokuserer herunder på fire underspørgsmål:

1. Hvordan planlægges og implementeres SSNs med henblik på at øge fødevaresikkerhed?
2. Hvad er den nuværende fødevaresikkerhedssituation for fattige kvinder, der deltager i VGD og hvilke faktorer bidrager til at skabe fødevaresikkerhed?

3. Hvilke typer mekanismer (coping) benyttes af udsatte kvinder i forsøget på at sikre fødevarer i forbindelse med chok og kriser?
4. Hvordan kan innovative tilgange bidrage til at gøre SSNs mere effektive?

Afhandlingen er baseret på fire artikler, der relaterer til underspørgsmålene. Derudover kommer yderligere fire kapitler, der diskuterer den omfattende litteratur vedrørende fattigdom i Bangladesh, den teoretiske ramme og begrebsliggørelsen af udviklingsstrategierne. Samlet set har de analytiske, teoretiske og begrebslige bidrag stor betydning for den empiriske analyse af udformningen af programmer for fattigdomsbekæmpelse

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Ismat Mahmuda, 2015

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.*

*Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*

- Chinese Proverb

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Awami League
ASA	Association of Social Advancement
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement committee
BWI	Bretton Woods Institution
CA	Capability Approach
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
FACHT	Food Assistance in Chittagong Hill Tracts Area
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFW	Food for Work
FS	Food Security
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GB	Grameen Bank
GDP	Gross Domestic product
GED	General Economic Division
GNI p.c	Gross National Income per capita
GNP	Gross National Product
GR	Gratuitous Relief
HFS	Household Food Security
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IAS	Instrumental Agency Success
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFS	Individual Food Security
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Government Organisation



NSAPR	National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction
OLS	Ordinary List Square
OMS	Open Market Sale
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RAS	Realized Agency Success
SMME	Small Medium and Microenterprise
SSN	Social Safety Net
STUP	Specially Targeted Ultra-Poor
TR	Test Relief
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development Programme
VGF	Vulnerable group feeding
WB	World Bank
WDR	World Development Report
WFP	World Food Programme



# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

This contribution seeks to investigate the function and effectiveness of social safety nets (SSNs) in enhancing livelihood improvement for women and implicitly development in Bangladesh. SSNs are important components of the poverty reduction programmes and considered as representative mechanisms of the government's overall strategy towards poverty. The overall focus of the thesis lies on poverty, food insecurity and gender inequality and the emphasis will be on how the SSNs in different ways contribute to ensure food security among the deprived segment of the population.<sup>1</sup> SSN's will be examined in terms of their objectives, operation and impact on reducing poverty and food insecurity among the poor. This is being done by a focus on two representative cases which are assumed to illuminate the strength and weaknesses of the SSNs.

Poverty reduction initiatives traditionally target livelihood protection and livelihood promotion of the poor. Although SSN's are in most cases donor financed, governments are responsible for implementing poverty reduction strategies, identified as poverty reduction tools (World bank 1990, Lipton, 1997, Devereux, 2002). After the release of the World Development Report in 1990, it was proposed that in order to achieve sustainable poverty reduction there is a need of SSNs to protect vulnerable groups. Therefore, as part of broader poverty reduction strategies, SSNs were introduced in developing countries as poverty reduction programmes. These programmes are supposed to contribute to development policy by reallocating income to the poor and vulnerable segments of the population, empower households to make improved investments in their future, assist households to cope with risks and permit the government to make selections that support competency and growth (Grosh et al, 2008, p. 1).

Issues around poverty, hunger and poverty reduction strategies have been subject to discussion within the developing countries over a long period. It is estimated that the world's population will increase by 80 million every year and reach almost 8 billion by 2020 where the major population growth will occur in the developing countries (Anderson et al, 1999, p. 5). The continuing population growth and subsequent increase in consumption indicate a rise in global demand for food. Estimates from FAO show that almost 842 million poor were unable to meet their

---

<sup>1</sup>This study defines the distressed population as rural women who are vulnerable in poverty and food insecurity.

dietary energy requirements in 2011-2013 and the vast majority of the poor live in the developing countries (FAO, 2013a, p. 8).

Because the subject of poverty is complicated and politicised the academic literature does not agree about the definition. This is why there are several approaches and definitions of the phenomenon. They consider a variety of elements for understanding poverty such as income, standard of living, violation of human dignity, powerlessness, lack of decision-making power, humiliation and so on.<sup>2</sup> Two opposite views of poverty can be highlighted as income poverty and capability poverty. While income poverty concentrates on earning, capability deprivation considers a person's ability of *functioning through her capabilities*.<sup>3</sup> Although the two definitions are considered here as being complementary the capability approach adds a new and important dimension. This should furthermore be inserted into a contextual approach in relation to the particular social, cultural and historical aspects (Lister, 2004, p.12). These points will be further elaborated upon in chapter two.

Poverty reduction strategies are not a new phenomenon but gained importance in the developing countries with the resolution of the United Nations (UN) to achieve the first target of the millennium development goals (MDG 2000) which was '*to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*'. The set targets of the MDG included a reduction of the proportion of poor (living on less than USD 1 per day) and hungry by fifty percent in the world. To achieve the goal SSNs were introduced as poverty reduction programmes. Of course SSNs may be seen as a vital component of government policies but investments in job creation, land reforms and other structural interventions such as education and health are more important in the sense that they deal with the causes and not the symptoms of poverty. This way SSNs are devoted and supposed to deal with poverty reduction as such but also deal with immediate and crisis situations.

In relation to this it is important to note that almost thirty years have passed since Amartya Sen wrote, "*Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat*" (Sen, 1981, p.1). This statement and the introduction of global UN sanctioned

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<sup>2</sup> For details please see Lister, R (2004, p. 12-36).

<sup>3</sup> Functioning is what an individual manages to do and be for his well-being. It is an outcome of his activities based on his *capabilities*. This can be very broad and can go from being well nourished or being healthy to being able of achieving self-respect. Capabilities are the ability what a person can do or be based on his freedom to select his valuable living options (Sen, 1992, p.40)

goals related to poverty reduction lead to a general academic and policy relevant puzzle. To what extent are the SSNs relevant in terms of national ownership, effective in the interventions and really able to deliver sustainable food security for the poor and deprived segments of the population? This is a key question relevant not only for Bangladesh but also for other countries where the multilateral institutions are operating.

In recent years gender has been included within the wider concept of poverty and development (Quisumbing et al, 2011, 1995). Research on developing countries confirms that aspects of gender relations, societal norms and practices and gender inequality in itself make women vulnerable and food insecure (Uraguchi, 2010, p. 491). Gender discrimination affects the household food distribution system which is a cause of malnutrition and severe food insecurity among female members of families where women are the main income earners (Chatterjee et al, 2012). Often it is observed that in rural Bangladesh female members of the family are the ones who take their meal last and also in the least amount (World Food Programme, 2013). FAO argues that promising and implementing human rights for women is a precondition of ensuring food security for all (FAO, 2005).

This thesis concentrates on two SSNs funded and operated from different channels. The Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGD) funded by the government and a donor funded programme Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR). The government of Bangladesh operates VGD while CFPR is run by a non-governmental organisation named the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). They both operate under the same policy framework but with different institutional backgrounds and distinct organisational procedures. The choice of selecting VGD and CFPR has been based on three main reasons. First, with an assumption of exploring the differences in programme operation and impact; and second, in order to provide a gender based understanding (as both programmes are targeted at poor and deprived women).

The third reason is broader than the previous two. Presently there are 135 SSNs functioning in the country under two distinct categories: social empowerment and social protection. VGD is placed under the category of *Food security programme: Social protection* implemented by the government while CFPR is a micro-financing programme operated by a non-governmental organisation. Both programmes have a common intention of poverty reduction, securing food and skills training to poor women with different operating mechanisms: one providing food thereby improving access to food and the other providing assets to develop the poor's coping mechanisms in the generation of income.

It is in this light that the thesis seeks to investigate the impact of SSNs as a tool for development in Bangladesh by focusing on these programmes contribution to the provision of food security. The food consumption pattern and gender disparities

will be analysed in this thesis together with how gender roles and disparities affect food security.

The study focuses on the following questions

**- How effective are social safety nets in improving livelihoods, food security and capabilities of poor distressed women in Bangladesh?**

In pursuit of this objective the study analyses two SSN programmes, the livelihood and food consumption of poor women, specific crisis periods in their life-cycle and socio-economic factors affecting their food security. Observing these points of poor rural women's coping and livelihood strategies provides the opportunity to explore how the programmes operate in ensuring food security and dealing with the reduction of gender discrimination practices.

This study takes a critical approach in the form of the capability perspective of Amartya Sen (1992) and Martha Nussbaum (2003). The conceptual and theoretical framework along with the operationalization of the concepts involved will be described further in detail in chapter two.

In order to explore the research problem, the aforementioned context opens up four important specific queries:

1. How do SSNs plan and implement interventions to promote higher levels of food security?

Out of 135 SSNs, seven are food security programmes (discussed in chapter 4), which aim at ensuring food security of the vulnerable. The national food security policies depend on the proper implementation of these programmes. Therefore, the effectiveness of these programmes needs to be assessed in order to understand the improvements of food security and observe whether there is space for strengthening their management practices. In searching for answers to the above query, the operational mechanisms and challenges in the programmes were taken into consideration by analysing and exploring the poverty context of Bangladesh, activities, operational procedures of the programmes, and women participants' perceptions based on the existing literature.

2. What is the present food security status of women participating in VGD and which socio economic factors contribute to their food insecurity status?

This section examines the present food security conditions of women participating in VGD. Government publications focus on the food insecure

population rate every five years through the Household income and Expenditure Survey of Bangladesh (HIES). This survey indicates the changes in food insecurity rates. This part of the dissertation intends to analyse the food security status of women participating in VGD by focusing on the implementation of the programme. It also identifies the socio economic factors which contribute towards their food availability and access to food security.

3. What type of coping mechanisms do vulnerable women adapt in securing themselves with food during shock or crisis periods?

Chambers (2006) defined vulnerability as “*exposure to contingencies and stress, and difficulty in coping with them. Vulnerability has thus two sides: an external side of risks, shocks, and stress to which an individual or household is subject and an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss*” (p.33). This is an important distinction which leads to a number of research problems. First of all how do women cope with different types of stress which are beyond their ability to control such as economic, social, political, health related and life-cycle shocks. Secondly, by exploring and seeking how shocks and crisis affect poor people and discover how women cope with both the external and internal impacts of vulnerability.

4. How can innovative approaches make SSNs more effective?

Jim Phills defines social innovation as “*any novel and useful solution to a social need or problem, that is better than existing approaches (i.e., more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just) and for which the value created (benefits) accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals*”. In other words, all “*innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social are seen as social innovations*” (Jim Phills in Mulgan, 2006, p.145). The micro-financing programme of Dr Mohammad Yunus (Grameen Bank) has been stated as a success story globally. The CFPR programme of BRAC is a micro-financing programme with a different operational mechanisms compared to Grameen Bank. Along these lines the study explores whether there are more innovative ways of programme operation by exploring the distinct mechanism of CFPR. In so doing it seeks to contribute towards improving the SSN design, operation techniques and implementation at the local level.

## BANGLADESH: AN OVERVIEW

### POLITICS AND ECONOMIC POLICY

This section reviews the political, economic and socio-cultural context of Bangladesh with a focus on economic policies and the evolution of poverty reduction strategies (PRS). The section discusses SSN's as a development tool used in poverty reduction. It describes the shifts in development policies in different periods. In addition the discussion presents the background against which donor agencies joined the process and how they gradually became the principal movers in the formulation of policy targeted at poverty reduction in Bangladesh. The donors directed the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and supervised the introduction of SSNs. This thesis investigates the function and effectiveness of SSNs in the improvement of livelihoods of the vulnerable and implicitly on development. The discussion therefore also covered the socio-cultural context of the country in order to understand the challenges under which SSNs are operating and how SSNs can contribute towards addressing these challenges.

In December, 1971, after a nine-month war with Pakistan, Bangladesh became a newly independent state on the global map. From 1971 to 2014, the country was controlled by two major parties: Bangladesh Awami league (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP). Besides, the country was under military rule (Martial Law) for fifteen years (from 1975 to 1990). The political system was socialist in the foundation period from 1971 to 1975. This however changed after the end of the military dictatorship in 1990 and the country moved towards neo-liberal de-regulation.

The ruling party after the liberation war (1971-1975), started off by introducing policies based on four pillars: nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy. The new country's first government identified major gaps in both the macro and micro economic sectors. The three major gaps in the macro economy were: food, fiscal and balance of payment (Sobhan et al, 2003, p.295) whereas the microeconomic gaps included low per capita income, low savings and investment. These gaps were recognised as determining the country's poverty status (Khan, 2005, p.4). The government decided to follow development strategies of state intervention and control (Sadiq, 2002). The period can be stated as a *'failed experiment of socialism and the rise of nouveau rich class'* (Khan, 2005, p.4). *"This first phase was characterised by massive nationalization of most productive entities, heavy trade control and other forms of state interventions as Bangladesh experimented with a socialist type economic framework"* (Sadiq and Sattar, 2004, p. 4060). The dominant development policies increased political patronage along with



smuggling, leading to the deterioration of the economy. For example, the government promoted political leaders from the ruling party and appointed them in high positions within state owned industries. The management of state-owned-enterprises was selected on the basis of having close relationship with the political party or high level officials of the ruling party rather than skills or experience. Therefore, these companies were operated by inexperienced administrators lacking administrative and management capacities (Guhathakurta, 2002, p.20 and Maniruzzaman, 1988, p.159). *“The nationalized enterprises, overloaded with an excess of not-so-qualified officers, led to mismanagement and corruption. A group of petty bourgeois traders made a quick profit as a result of state patronage”* (Islam, 1985, p.201).

As a consequence of this development policy, the economy of the first ruling government faced a severe economic crisis due to low rates of production, deficit financing and a decline in foreign exchange reserves resulting in an average GDP growth of 2 per cent (along with a population growth of 3 per cent) (Islam, 1985, p.201). A massive cyclone caused a famine in 1974 and the country’s poverty rate stood at 80 per cent (Kabeer, 2002, p.590). It became unavoidable for the country to rely on foreign aid due to the emerging need for massive post-war rehabilitation, famine and economic crisis (Sobhan, 1982). Embedded in the socialist ideology of the government was the desire for independence which was therefore against seeking aid from the capitalist countries (Hossain, 1996). However, the war devastated and disaster prone country with a huge economic crisis was in need of assistance and this forced the government to seek help from the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI).<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the increasing dependency on foreign development assistance forced an early shift from socialism towards neoliberal economic reform (Hossain, 2004, p.5).

During the 1980s, the BWIs imposed the ideas of neo-liberalism and open market strategies of the US and UK to the aid receiving countries. BWIs propagated these ideas as a condition to providing development aid and forced the aid receiving countries to become part of these new economic policies known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). Hence, as an aid dependent poor country, Bangladesh also became a part of the SAP (Rahman, 2012). SAPs advocated a contradictory interest in policy ownership on the aid receiving countries which faced several criticisms and *“the World Development Report (WDR) (2000/2001) categorically argued that local conditions and ownership of aid receiving country*

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<sup>4</sup> The World Bank and IMF are the Bretton Woods institutions which together with General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/ the trade organisation were set up in 1944 by a meeting of 43 participating countries in Bretton Wood in New Hampshire, USA.

*should be taken into consideration while maintaining development cooperation”* (Rahman, 2012, p.84).

As a result of these arguments the BWIs introduced a new strategy through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which aimed at reducing poverty among all aid receiving countries. PRSP was expected to be prepared by the aid receiving poor countries as a condition to receiving aid. It was a criterion that *“In PRSPs, national governments must show that they understand the current domestic problems in relation to poverty and must explain how they will create a democratic environment, including all the stakeholders in decision-making and implementation”* (Kamruzzaman, 2014, p.81). The PRSPs (discussed in the next section) of Bangladesh is one of the clearest examples of being under the BWIs guided ownership.<sup>5</sup>

Along with foreign development assistance the country moved towards further economic deregulation and de-nationalisation from 1976 but it took 15 years (up to 1991) to get a clear direction. From 1991 a major progress in trade policy occurred *“with a substantial scaling down and rationalisation of tariffs, removal of trade-related quantitative restrictions and elimination of import licensing, unification of exchange rates and the move to a more flexible exchange rate system”* (Sadiq and Sattar, 2004, p. 4060). The policy shift registered a positive impact on the economy and the poverty level gradually dropped. The poverty rate of 80 per cent in 1974 went down significantly to 57 per cent in 1990’s. But this decline was mainly observed in urban areas with 35 per cent poverty rate while the rate in the rural areas was around 57 per cent (World Bank, 1998, Rahman et al., 1998, Kabeer, 2002). Although there was an increase in real per capita income of the people in 2000, the national poverty rate was still high with 31.5 per cent in 2013. This indicates that Bangladesh still remains a country of low income with significant poverty and deprivation (World Bank, 2013, IFAD, 2013). Hence, for reduction of the existing poverty situation, Bangladesh had to prepare PRSP’s as being an aid receiving country of the World Bank and IMF.

## **POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER AND SOCIAL SAFETY NETS**

The poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) of Bangladesh is prepared with broad consultation with stakeholders and development partners such as the World Bank and IMF. The paper describes the macroeconomic, structural and social policies in

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<sup>5</sup> “Guided ownership takes place when the loan receiving countries try to achieve policy ownership as part of loan conditions on the donors to satisfy the donors” (Rahman, 2012, p.85)

support of growth and poverty reduction (IMF, 2013, p.ii). The latest PRSP (FY2011-FY2015) of the country was prepared to target accelerated growth and reducing poverty (IMF, 2013). According to the PRSP of the country, “*an essential pre-requisition for rapid reduction of poverty is to attain high economic growth such that it provides the foundation for sustainable productive employment and incomes...*” (IMF, 2013, p. 2). Sustainable employment creation can lead to economic growth but it requires a sustainable increase in investment. Investment can contribute towards reducing infrastructure constraints (mainly power and transport) and finance for human development (IMF, 2013).

Financing for investment can come from both domestic and foreign sources. Domestic financing in the country comes from public resource mobilisation, private savings and remittance.

“*The total investment requirement under the Plan has been estimated at Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 13.5 trillion in FY2011 constant prices. ....Domestic financing is projected at BDT (90.7% of total Plan investment). External financing requirement has been estimated to be BDT 1.3 trillion (9.3% of the Plan investment)*” (IMF, 2013, p.3). The following table 1.1 shows the financing of investment of FY 2011-2015.

Table 1. 1 Financing of investment (FY2011-015) (FY2011 prices)

Items (Billion Taka)	Total	Share (%)	Public	Share (%)	Private	Share (%)
<b>Total</b>	13469.4	100	3075.8	100	10393.6	100
<b>Investment</b>						
<b>Domestic resource</b>	12215.3	90.7	2239.6	72.8	9975.7	96.0
<b>External resource</b>	1254.1	9.3	836.2	27.2	417.9	4.0

(Source, IMF, 2013, p.97)

The PRSP shows that poverty reduction strategies give emphasis to the perception that investment can create jobs which will generate wealth and reduce poverty. In addition to this perception, human development was incorporated in the strategy by combining with educational reforms (considering education a major component of human development). Therefore, the PRS targets both income poverty and human poverty. The main elements of the PRS in the five year plan FY2011-2015 incorporated development policies and programmes to (1) promote growth by increasing labour productivity and creating jobs (2) increase farm income through better productivity and enhance access of poor to the production inputs (3) stimulate

women's participation in the labour force (4) promote overseas employment (5) improve the poor's access to education, health and nutrition (6) strengthen the coordination, targeting and coverage of social protection programmes (7) ensure stable food prices (8) mitigate the adverse consequences of climate change (IMF, 2013, p.149). These eight sectors are the targets around which the development programmes are established. It is evident that social protection programmes are incorporated as an element of the PRSP.

Social protection programmes (as development programmes for poverty reduction) are established to address both income and human poverties. These programmes produce direct and indirect effects on poverty reduction by combining direct and indirect measures. Direct measures target the poor through programmes that address increase in income or employment generation. Indirect measures are growth oriented mainly covering infrastructure development or rehabilitation programmes (IMF, 2013, p.165). Related to this SSNs in Bangladesh are social protection programmes covering both direct and indirect measures. The primary function of SSNs are to protect households from sharp reductions in consumption by providing support to overcome shocks and help them to enter income earning activities (Subbarao and Smith., 2003, p. 10). These are programmes for targeted groups (groups at risk) aiming at protecting them from crisis and promoting their livelihoods. Through addressing both concerns (protection and promotion) SSNs therefore work towards poverty reduction. Distributing cash, food or assets, enables the vulnerable to cope during crisis periods and this acts as a protective mechanism. To improve the lifestyle, SSNs promotional mechanisms are intended to focus on human capital that increases coping capabilities of the vulnerable (Rahman et al, 2013, p. 178).

The country has a huge number of SSNs which address various forms of risks and vulnerabilities and attempt to reduce poverty through direct transfer of resources to the poor. Bangladesh started targeted social protection SSNs from the year 1975. Since then these programmes have gone through functional changes in their administrative structure and implementation mechanisms. SSNs are hence food, cash or asset based poverty reduction programmes categorised as social protection and social empowerment programmes (Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh, 2015). Table 1.2 provides an overview of SSN coverage and allocation in the national budget of Bangladesh.

Table 1. 2 Allocation for SSNs in the national budget

<b>Fiscal Year (FY)</b>	<b>Total allocation for SSNs</b>	<b>Percentage to budget</b>	<b>Coverage (in Lac)</b>	<b>Coverage (in Million)</b>
<b>2008-09</b>	13845.27	14.71	697.79	69.779
<b>2009-10</b>	16705.81	15.12	591.22	59.122
<b>2010-11</b>	20893.52	16.07	808.03	80.803
<b>2011-12</b>	21975.23	13.63	771.18	77.118
<b>2012-13</b>	23097.52	12.2	708.64	70.864
<b>2013-14</b>	26654.01	12.33	770.65	77.065
<b>2014-15</b>	30751.11	12.28	880.18	88.018

(Source Ahmed et al, 2014, p.49)

SSNs in Bangladesh are operated both by government (GO) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) but critics to lack in coordination and no clear division of labour exists between government and NGO in SSN operation which give rise to duplication and overlaps (Ahmed et al, 2014). At present the government implements SSNs through different ministries and through 2370 NGOs (Bangladesh NGO bureau, 2015) which are involved in delivering social and economic services.<sup>6</sup> NGOs work cover access to credit, welfare activities that target education, health and women affairs, as well as acting as a bridge for donor funds. Due to the failure of many government agencies donors have been interested to channel funds through these institutions to reduce the “*gap between the developmental needs and aspirations of the citizens on the one hand and the limited capacity and performance of the government on the other*” (Zaman, 2003 in Zohir, 2004, p.4113). These organisations should play a supportive role to the government and are sometimes more effective in reaching out to the grassroots level with their development initiatives (Hassan and Forhad, 2013, p.60).

Rahman’s (2013) data indicate that 98 per cent of the SSNs implemented by the ministries exhibit a disharmony in their coordination with NGOs and suggest that SSNs operate from a single ministry or department to improve this gap. The deficiency in coordination gives rise to overlapping programmes. For example, the Vulnerable Group Development programme (VGD) is financed and operated by the ministry of women and children affairs while the Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development Programme is operated by BRAC and jointly financed by BRAC and the World Food Programme funding. The Ministry of Finance has a list of *Social Protection* and *Social Empowerment* programmes in the country. However this list does not consist of SSNs operated by NGOs and does not show

<sup>6</sup> There are no government data which give a clear overview of precisely how many NGO’s are involved in the SSN programmes.

the source of funding of the NGO operating SSNs (Ministry of Finance, 2015). The government budget shows that the allocation for SSNs in the national budget is increasing gradually over the years (presented in Table 1.2) and it is argued that these programmes play an important role in achieving poverty reduction. For example, Pradhan et al (2014) indicate that *“VGD program transfers reduced extreme poverty by 20% and played a significant role in increasing productive assets such as livestock and poultry”* (Pradhan et al, 2014, p.279). The above study also indicate that cash or in kind transfer SSNs increase the quantity and quality of food consumption in households (Pradhan et al, 2014).

Additionally, the National Food Policy Plan of Action (2008-2015) was prepared under the framework of PRS. This policy highlighted the need for strengthening SSNs as well as employment or income generating opportunities for the vulnerable in order to ensure food security. It is as a result of this that income generating opportunities and targeted food based programmes such as safety nets were emphasised (Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2008). According to the document the prime need for ensuring food security in the country in 2008 was:

*“Expanding income generating opportunities for women/female-headed households and the disabled in agricultural activities as well as in rural micro and small enterprise development, through enhancing their access to productive assets,.....Addressing instability inherent to agricultural and other rural activities through strengthening disaster preparedness, improving early warning/monitoring systems for effective food planning, stock and trade management as well as introducing risk management tools for small farmers and rural micro-entrepreneurs”*(Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2008, p.23).

The household income and expenditure survey (HIES, 2010) indicate a gradual rise in food intake (the average per capita per day intake of food) from 1995-96 to the year 2010 (See table 1.3) which can be attributed to the PRS. The average food intake was recorded as 1000 gram (which is one kg per capita per day) at the aggregate level whereas the 1995-96 data indicate a lower level of food intake although the data show very small increase.

Table 1. 3 Average food intake (grams)

Survey year	Residence		
	National	Rural	Urban
2010	1000	1000.5	985.5
2005	947.8	946.3	952.1
2000	893.1	898.7	870.7
1995-96	913.8	910.5	930.8

(Source HIES, 2010)

Operating PRS through development programmes and policies initiated societal and cultural changes as well. The total population of the country is about 160.4 million people (World population report, 2015). Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The majority of the population resides in rural areas where the main occupation is agriculture (Lewis, 2011, p.3). Other occupations of the rural population include agricultural labour, daily non-agricultural wages and petty business in both the formal and informal sector. The trade policy and investment increase has resulted in a rise in export oriented industries such as ready-made garment factories. The rise of industries created job opportunities which have made a change in the livelihood strategies of the rural population. It made a shift in the occupation of the rural poor from the agricultural to the non-agricultural sector. The export oriented industrialisation promoted the growth of women's participation in the labour market as well by creating jobs suitable for women.

SSNs also had an effect by increasing the participation of women in the labour market. Social protection and employment generating SSNs encouraged women to join the work force. Moreover, cash or asset distributing SSNs incorporated women in the building of small enterprises.

It is therefore evident from this discussion that PRS overall have made a positive improvement in the country's poverty and food insecurity status by combining policies and poverty reduction development programmes (such as SSNs). In contrast however the country's national poverty rate positions it in the low income bracket in the world. Furthermore, the food security data indicate that the chronically poor households do not have the ability to provide three meals a day (Rahman et al, 2013, p.234).

This study focuses on the role of SSNs in the provision of food security and places poverty, food security and SSN as basic conceptual variables. Additionally it includes the social gender biasness as a barrier to development. The discussion henceforth takes a gender dimension with the assumption that the gender norms of the country work as a social constraint towards poverty reduction.

## **GENDER NORMS: CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL CONTEXT**

Bangladesh has a patriarchal social system where women are considered subordinate to their male counterparts. The dominant position of the patriarchal system in society has made women socially and economically dependent on men.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father in a male-dominated family. Patriarchy is a system in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation and oppression by men" (Bhasin, 1993, p. 3).

The traditional belief that a man has a right to control a woman's activities make women subordinate to men at both societal and household level affecting every aspect of their lives such as their decision-making, work and levels of freedom (Rahman et al, 2013, p. 1).

Embedded norms, social and religious practices act as a barrier to women's access to land, resources and even food, limiting their entry into the labour market and education. Also, "*in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance and inheritance, women are deprived of equal rights*" (Sultan, 2010, p.31). The government is trying to reduce gender inequality in sectors such as employment, education and health where major inequalities exist. But, due to several structural reasons such as tradition, culture and religion the intervention is still ineffective. These cultural practices create gender discrimination affecting poverty and food security of women.<sup>8</sup>

Women's rights are disregarded by the patriarchal social system where traditional power relations between men and women are skewed to the advantage of men. This disregard to women's rights acts as a consequence of affecting "*their roles and behavior at all levels, from mundane individual issues to the vastly civic*" (Begum, 2015, p.755).

Social constraints can be identified as (1) the existing patriarchal system in society which is described as "classical patriarchy" by Kandiyoti (1988), where the authority lies on a male member of the family as family head (2) property ownership trends among women where women do not own property (3) patrilocal marital traditions where the women have to leave their parents and reside with the husband's family and become a part of her husband's patrilineal group. In this cultural context women's position strongly depends on giving birth to a son who will inherit the property (Kabeer, 2011, p.501). Misconception and misinterpretation of *Purdah* also restricts women's mobility and opportunities and places them in the group that needs protection.<sup>9</sup> These issues make women dependent on men all along their life cycle for economic needs and social protection. The social family and kinship system does not only limit women's access to limited material resources but also restricts social interaction.

The gender inequality trend in Bangladesh is further analysed in chapter two. This section will highlight how existing gender inequality acts as a barrier to women's

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<sup>8</sup> This issue will be discussed in detail (in chapter two "gender inequality, poverty and food security")

<sup>9</sup> *Purdah* is a Muslim religious practice restricting women from public observation. It includes covering a women's entire body along with her hair by garments. This practice was introduced with a concern of controlling women's sexuality and exposer from being object of the men's desire.



empowerment and how SSNs can play a positive role in reducing gender inequalities.

Empowerment can be referred to as a person's ability "*to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them*" (Kabeer, 2001 et al, p. 19). The expansion of ability can arise by incorporating - enhancement in resource, agency and achievement (Kabeer et al, 1999b). The ability expansion therefore covers three interrelated dimensions: resources as precondition, agency as a process and achievements as an outcome (Kabeer et al, 1999b, and p.437).

The first component resources can be economic, human or social.<sup>10</sup> All three play an important role in enhancing ability. Resource distribution is determined by various rules, norms and practices (this is applicable in both domains of life e.g. society and family). In discussing empowerment therefore, it is important to understand and know how people get access to resources in a certain society. (Kabeer, et al. 2001).

The second component related to ability expansion is agency. Though in economic literature agency is often operationalized as the decision-making power of an individual, in reality it can be considered as "*a much wider range of purposive actions, including bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, resistance and protest as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. Agency also encompasses collective, as well as individual, reflection and action.*" (Kabeer et al 2001, p.21).

Resources and agency together constitutes capabilities (described by Sen, 1985). Capabilities are the potential that women can have for living her life as she wants. With this she can achieve valuable ways of being and doing. Functioning are the possible ways of these being and doings which she values and functioning achievements are the particular ways of these being and doings which are realised by different individuals (Kabeer, 1999b, p.438). So, development in capabilities by resource provision and agency can in a combined manner promote a move towards the outcome of achievement.

At the societal level social norms and practices often act as a challenge towards enhancing these (resource and agency) components. SSN's targeting women rather than men in theory help in addressing gender inequalities by distributing resources (asset, money, food) and adopting necessary means to strengthen agency (generating employment and providing opportunities for women to join the labour

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of economic resources can be, land, money, capital etc. Human resources are embodied in a person and encompass her knowledge, skill, creativity etc. Social resources are founded on claims, obligations and expectations of society, network or relationship prevailing in different spheres of life (Kabeer, 2001, p.20).

market, developing skills by training and education and making women capable of working outside the home and generating income) (Described in chapter 2).

*“Loans to men do little to challenge the internal gender inequalities of households, and indeed appear to reinforce them by giving men an affordable base from which to prevent their wives from engaging in their own income-earning activities..... It is one of the injustices of the way that society is organized in Bangladesh that extremely able women, even those from better-off households, are unable to realize their entrepreneurial potential because their gender acts as a barrier to gaining access to the necessary resources”* (Kabeer, 2001a, p.83).

The majority of the population is Muslim (85 per cent) and the rest are Hindus (15 per cent) (Lewis, 2011, p.13). Women’s rights of access to resources as compared to men are unequal in both cultures. Among the Hindu’s the heirs of property are men (normally father and son). On the other hand the Muslim men inherit double the size of family property as compared to women. In practice however, majority of rural Bangladeshi men do not give the women their share. The cultural practice makes women to consider themselves as subordinate to men. The women lack the ability to ask or bargain for their share of property. The women in both of these cases (Hindu and Muslim) therefore end up owning very little or no property.

The intention of SSNs is to promote the empowerment of women by providing them opportunities to access to resources and expand their agency. This in turn enables them to express their potential as resource managers, producers or service providers. This may then benefit both households and communities (IFAD, 2003). It has been discussed earlier in this thesis that agency covers decision-making as well as other actions such as bargaining, negotiation, resistance, protest and so on. Therefore, empowered women can act as agents of change by contributing in both spheres of household and community.

It is evident that providing resources to women is an effective investment in poor and food insecure communities (IFAD, 2003). Resource provision along with knowledge and confidence can enhance women’s status as a driving force in transforming the lives of family members as well as the community. Hence, women can act as *“powerful allies in the process of social and economic change”* (IFAD, 2003, p.7) and reduce both internal and external vulnerability.

Evidence from *Kerala*, an Indian state, can be cited as a vivid example. In the late 1930s social and political movements in the region *“covered changes in land relationship, family and kinship and rules binding them and above all in the social and economic rigidities which the caste system imposed. The social and political movements of the period not only accelerated changes, but instilled in the average Kerala person a new sense of individual dignity”* (Saradamoni, 1994, p.502). The movements focused on enhancing women’s access to education, property

ownership and employment (Sen, 2001). Subsequently there is a high literacy level among women in *Kerala* and they also can access well-paying and respected jobs.

Scholars such as Dreze and Sen argue that the expansion of social opportunity is critical to sustainable development. *“Extension of basic education, better health care, more effective land reforms and greater access to provisions of social security would enable the marginalized sections of society to lead a less restricted life and, also, to make better use of markets”* (Dreze and Sen in Veron, 2001, p.602). The evidence of *Kerala* indicates that higher levels of literacy enabled the women to access well-paid and respected jobs. In addition change in land relationship enhanced women’s access to property ownership. These factors led women’s empowerment in *Kerala*.

Moreover access to well respected jobs may lead to change in the culture of men viewing women as subordinates. Coupled with this the status acquired indicates that women are hence able to access social resources as well. Additionally, the scenario of women working outside the household enhances their mobility as well as their participation in decision-making within the community. Hence as a result of this empowerment certain outcomes such as increase in life expectancy, increased fertility and maternal mortality rates are expected.

The life expectancy of women in *Kerala* is above 76 years compared to that of men which is 70 years (Sen, 2001). Moreover the fertility rate has declined and this has an impact on lowering maternal mortality rate. In developing countries such as Bangladesh a huge number of women die from giving birth frequently. Low maternal mortality and long life expectancy are symbols of human development. It is also a fact that a healthy woman will give birth to a healthy child. It is therefore clear that access to resources and agency may have positive outcomes such as higher life expectancy, healthy life and nourishment for both mother and child. These outcomes are important components of development which were achieved in *Kerala* as a result of women empowerment.

## KEY CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### CONCEPTS

The aim of this section is to present the key concepts and the theoretical background for analysing poverty reduction programme SSNs in ensuring food security.<sup>11</sup>

Four concepts have so far been introduced. They are poverty, food security, gender and SSNs but will be elaborated more in detail in chapter two. The study considers development not only as determined by measuring the growth of GNP or industrialisation or modernisation, but as “*a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy*” (Sen, 2010, p.3). It acknowledges the growth of a person’s income as an important development measure. It considers income growth as an important means of expanding the real freedom of an individual and in so doing allowing her to achieve well-being.<sup>12</sup> However this study perceives poverty as capability deprivation (Sen, 2010). It follows Sen’s definition “*Poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty*” (2010, p.87). The research therefore trusts that capability expansion is necessary for better life and mobility. Enabling a person to convert his/her *capabilities to functioning* can contribute significantly to poverty reduction. Hence, this contribution criticises the traditional monetary based poverty measurement believing that it is not enough and focus should also be given on deprivation and well-being. Therefore, being critical in nature the study considers the Capability Approach (CA) of Sen as the basic framework for analysis.

To continue with the critical foundation, the four major concepts poverty, food security, gender and SSNs are considered as: Poverty as an obstacle to development; food security as an essential component of well-being and development; gender bias as a development barrier; and SSNs as poverty reduction programmes. It is considered that arriving at precise definitions of these core

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<sup>11</sup> Discussed more detailed in chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Well-being in this study is based on the concept of functioning (described in chapter 2) of Sen which is “*achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be*” (Sen in Basu, 1987, p.71). Thus functioning is a pattern of activity or way of being representing an achievement of a person. In Sen’s word “*What he or she manages to do*” (Sen, 1999a, p.7) is his or her functioning. Well-being of a person is described as “*an evaluation of this being, indicating the kind of being he or she is achieving or his or her valuation function*” (Sen in Ransome, 2010, p.47).

concepts will strengthen the point of departure and achieving a critical analytic view.

The study views food security as defined by Maxwell and Smith (1992, p. 8) as “*secure access at all times to sufficient food*” and therefore deal in turn with (a) sufficiency, (b) access, (c) security and (d) time. This definition indicates that availability of adequate amounts (sufficiency) of healthy food (secure) for all time and being able to purchase (access) the food are necessary to become food secure.

Gender inequality is considered as a barrier to well-being and development. Whereas development is considered to be when an individual achieves his/her real freedom and well-being in this study, gender inequality and the need of achieving equal rights in society are also important issues to address.

Thus, poverty reduction programmes are regarded as a remedy for reducing poverty, ensuring food security and reducing gender inequality. Therefore, the SSN programmes will be assessed according to their contribution towards ensuring food security and well-being of poor women participants in the SSN programme.

## **FRAMEWORK**

The thesis intends to present and discuss the most dominant approaches to poverty, food security, gender inequality and effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes by constructing a critical framework for employing the capability approach. The capability approach provides an outline for the assessment of individual well-being, and offers the theoretical basis for inequality, poverty and policy analysis (Kuklys, 2005, p.1). This approach has been adopted because of its central concepts: capability, functioning and freedom. The *functioning* of an individual is defined as an achievement (Sen, 2003). The approach operates at two levels of well-being. On one hand, functioning measures the realised welfare and, on the other hand, the capabilities measure the feasibility or potential welfare which corresponds to the outcome versus opportunities distinction (Kuklys and Robeyns 2004). Amartya Sen proposes that “*Social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functioning they value*” (Alkair, 2012, p 19). Thus, Sen’s framework of capability approach shows a path of analysing social arrangements through capability expansion for well-being.

The capability approach has been developed further by different scholars in recent years. Among them the work of Martha Nussbaum is considered to be applicable in the field of gender inequality. Nussbaum argues that the government should guarantee to all its citizens, through the constitution a set of capabilities which she considers as central human capabilities (consisting of 10 capabilities). Making the set flexible and open (for discussion and adding more elements) she identifies these central human capabilities as being universally applicable (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-

42). Due to the existing gender inequality in Bangladesh the constitution has included provisions ensuring women's rights and equality in reducing discrimination (described in chapter six). Nussbaum's concept is considered to be an important aspect for analysing the research area from a gender perspective and it partly provides a lens to highlight the implications of these constitutional guarantees.

## **CHOICE OF PROGRAMMES**

The research questions were pursued by observing and interviewing participants from two different SSN programmes (VGD and CFPR). The two programmes are described in the following section.

### **(A) The VGD programme**

With the aim of reducing extreme poverty and food insecurity after the famine in 1974 the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) initiated the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme in Bangladesh. This programme was renamed Vulnerable Group Development programme (VGD) in 1987 when skill development trainings were incorporated as a component of livelihood promotion (Matin and Hulme, 2003, p.654). Gradually the programme became the longest (in duration) and one of the largest SSNs in the country. Presently, the programme is funded by the government.

#### **Selection of participants**

The selection of VGD participants was done by local elected representatives such as Union Parishod chairmen or members. Union Parishod or Union Councils are the smallest rural administrative and local government units. In practice, the elected members of VGD women selection committee prepare a list of participating members who they consider eligible for receiving support. The selection of participants is based on specific criteria with the following characteristics:

- (1) Women who are heads of the households where there is no adult male income earner in the family. The programme gives preference to women who are widows, divorced, and separated or women with a disabled husband.
- (2) Households having no land ownership or own less than 15 decimals of land.
- (3) Households not having a regular source of earning. The normal criteria are to select households which earn less than 300 Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) equivalents to USD 3.85 per month from daily or casual labour.
- (4) Members of the household who often skip their meals due to food insufficiency and consume less than two full meals per day.
- (5) Poor housing conditions with regard to construction and sanitation facilities

(6) Women who are not members of other food and/or cash based programmes or have not been VGD participants at any time.

Priority is given to (1) women who are physically fit and have the ability and interest to work in groups and (2) have ability of developing their economic and social condition (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, p.5).

### **Programme support**

The programme provides a monthly food ration for two years in combination with some development packages. The packages include income generating and life skill training combined with a personal saving programme and access to micro-financing or NGO membership.

The monthly food ration includes 30kg of rice or wheat for a two year period. The development services are intended to provide elementary training in health, hygiene and nutrition related knowledge, raise women's awareness of civil and legal rights, HIV awareness and, knowledge about measures of disaster preparation and coping mechanisms. The programme also provides income generating skills training activities and enrolls the members in a cash saving scheme. Table 1.4 shows the programme coverage and budget allocation of the government in different from 2011 to 2015.

Table 1. 4 Total coverage and budget allocation of VGD women

<b>Year</b>	<b>Coverage women (in hundred thousand/lac)</b>	<b>Budget allocation BDT (billion)</b>	<b>Budget allocation USD (billion)</b>
2011-12	<b>73.6</b>	<b>7.8102</b>	<b>0.1004</b>
2012-13	<b>75.0</b>	<b>8.0684</b>	<b>0.1037</b>
2013-14	<b>64.72</b>	<b>8.3677</b>	<b>0.1076</b>
2014-15	<b>64.72</b>	<b>8.8692</b>	<b>0.1140</b>

(Website of Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh, 2015, available at [www.mof.gov.bd/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=217&Itemid=1](http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=217&Itemid=1))

### **(B) The CFPR Programme of BRAC**

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) started the programme Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the ultra-poor (CFPR) in

the year 2002. The programme was initiated upon the realisation that most of the micro-financing programmes are unable to reach the ultra-poor. These programmes have criteria related to provide cash or food to the poor. BRAC recognised that providing the poor with cash may help them for a short term but it cannot ensure a sustainable income generation (BRAC, 2009). This realisation drove BRAC to initiate the CFPR by identifying the ultra-poor group and providing them with a special approach to micro-financing (which will be elaborated in chapter 7) that helps them to develop their own employment and income generating activities.

### **Selection of participants**

There are a total of 64 districts in Bangladesh. Among these districts Rangpur, Kurigram and Nilphamary are the poorest. The CFPR programme selected its 5000 woman households from these three districts in the year 2002. The selection of ultra-poor households was based on the following criteria.

- “(1) *Dependent upon female domestic work or begging as income source*
- (2) *Ownership of less than 10 decimals of land*
- (3) *No male adult active member in the household*
- (4) *Minor children or school going engaged in paid work and*
- (3) *Possession of no productive assets by the household”* (Ahmed et al., 2009, p 5).

The households which were members of other micro-financing programmes or government development projects were not considered. The selected household was described as “*Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP) or Selected Ultra Poor*” (BRAC, 2009, p.5).

### **Features of the Programme:**

The CFPR programme mainly focuses on targeting the ultra-poor (poorest of the poor) and helps them to develop their own enterprises. Developing entrepreneurship therefore was the main target of the programme. Some informal social support was also provided to help them build entrepreneurial capacity. Choosing the appropriate enterprise for each participant was the first step taken by the programme administration after selecting the participants. To do this the institution depended on factors such as past experience (if they had any) and ability of running an enterprise, or management skills. Social, environmental and market related factors were also considered while choosing the right enterprise. The enterprises were selected by interviewing the participants on their preferred interests. Most of the participants were interested in taking part in poultry and livestock rearing. There were also women interested in vegetable growing. The next step was to provide the participants with training on the enterprise development. After completion of the training every member was provided with some assets which would help to develop their enterprise. The asset was transferred within a month of completion of training. After transferring the required asset, the programme provided the women with necessary support for maintaining the asset (described in Table 1.5). Weekly



monitoring and advice was provided. A weekly stipend was also offered (on average BDT 70 or USD 0.90) which varied in amount according to the type of enterprise. The transferred total asset value was on average TK 6000 (USD 79) for every participant. Health care support for the animals was also provided.

The following table 1.5 shows the supporting packages provided towards the beneficiaries in the 5-year programme. The programme ended in the year 2007.

Table 1. 5 Support package of CFPR

Component	Support received	Duration of support
<b>Asset Transfer</b>	Assets for enterprise e.g. cow, goat, poultry, nursery, non-firm assets etc. (on average 6000 per women )	In the beginning
<b>Enterprise Development Training</b>	Class room orientation and training Hands on training by enterprise management and technical supervision.	3-5 days training before asset transfer 2 years
<b>Support for Enterprise</b>	All inputs required to maintain the enterprise	The first cycle of enterprise
<b>Weekly Stipend</b>	Tk70	(Enterprise specific) Until income start from enterprise
<b>Health Care Support</b>	Free medical treatment: Training to build awareness Regular visit of health volunteers for preventive diseases	2 years 2 years
<b>Social Development</b>	Awareness raising training	2 years
<b>Mobilisation of Local Elite for Support</b>	Community supports-material, information, guidance	2 year and continuous

Source: BRAC (2009), *Research Monograph Series, 2009*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, series no.39, p-7.

The rationale for providing the description of VGD and CFPR in this section is to lay a basis for a sound understanding of the programmes featured in the study and their distinctive nature of support with the common objective of poverty reduction.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION AND DATA COLLECTION**

Both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data are the data generated through interviewing the participants while the secondary data are the statistical data obtained from government publications and extant literature. Details of data collection will be described in chapter 4. Primary data was collected from two different Upazila or sub-districts (Sonargaon and Rangpur sadar).

For administrative purposes the country is divided into eight divisions, 64 districts and 493 upazilas or sub districts. The administration of the country is divided in eight regions called divisions. The name of the division is derived from the major district which acts as the administrative headquarter of the division. The divisions of the country are divided into 64 districts. These districts are further divided into 493 sub districts or upazilas and 4550 union councils to fulfil the administrative functioning of local government. The following figure 1.1 shows the administrative geography of Bangladesh.

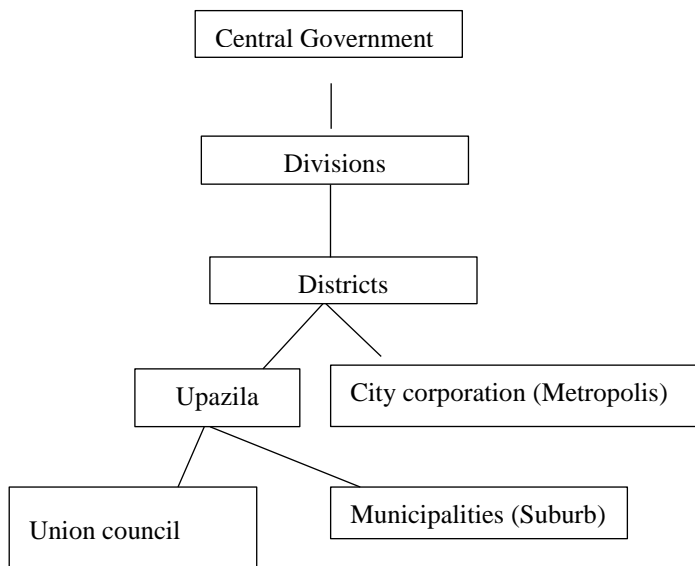


Figure 1.1 Administrative geography of Bangladesh

The poverty map of Bangladesh (Figure 1.3) shows a statistical estimation of poverty up to the Upazila level. According to the poverty map Rangpur and Barisal are the poorest divisions while Sylhet and Chittagong has the lowest poverty incidence. Apart from Barisal the northern and southern districts have a high prevalence of poverty with a low primary school completion rate. Furthermore, the rate of poverty is high in disaster prone areas for example, districts beside the river *Jamuna* where communities are repeatedly affected by floods and river erosion. The south west part is prone to cyclones, tidal surges, water intrusion and water logging (World Bank, 2014, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/08/27/latest-bangladesh-poverty-maps-launched>).

Rangpur is one of the poorest divisions of the country. The region has lagged behind compared to other divisions in poverty reduction. Besides, Rangpur is particularly vulnerable to seasonal hunger (Elahi and Ara, 2008; Rahman, 1995; Zug, 2006). Rangpur is also environmentally vulnerable. It is prone to river erosion and floods. The adverse effects of sand deposits caused by floods creates low crop yield. The infrastructure is poor and the employment opportunities, except in agriculture, are very few and the agricultural wage rates are lower than in other districts in the country (Khandker and Mahmud, 2012, p.5). Therefore the households in Rangpur have limited livelihood opportunities and are vulnerable to natural disasters and seasonal hunger.

The data of the CFPR programme was collected from the Upazila Rangpur sadar. CFPR programmes' main objective was to target the ultra-poor of the country. The programme therefore targeted the poorest region. I believe that gathering data from participants of CFPR after three years of completion would potentially provide information about the sustainability and effect of CFPR. Furthermore, SSNs are tools for protecting the vulnerable from sudden shocks (such as natural disaster or household related crisis) and supporting them towards a better livelihood. CFPR participants were therefore representative of people facing economic and environmental vulnerability such as poverty, seasonal hunger and natural calamities.

VGD is the largest SSN covering all divisions of the country. There was political unrest in the year 2013 when communication was severely hampered due to extended strikes by political parties. Prolonged transport strikes hindered my movement. During this time VGD data on the programme was gathered from a close distance from the capital, Upazila Sonargaon, situated in the district of Narayanganj. Sonargaon is 27 kilometres south-east from the capital Dhaka. The Upazila is constituted with 10 unions. The total population is 400,358 (Male - 204,438 and female - 195,920) with 88,820 households (BBS, 2015). The 10 unions are well connected with each other. The main occupation and livelihood strategies are agriculture, petty trading, domestic works, rickshaw pulling and construction labour.

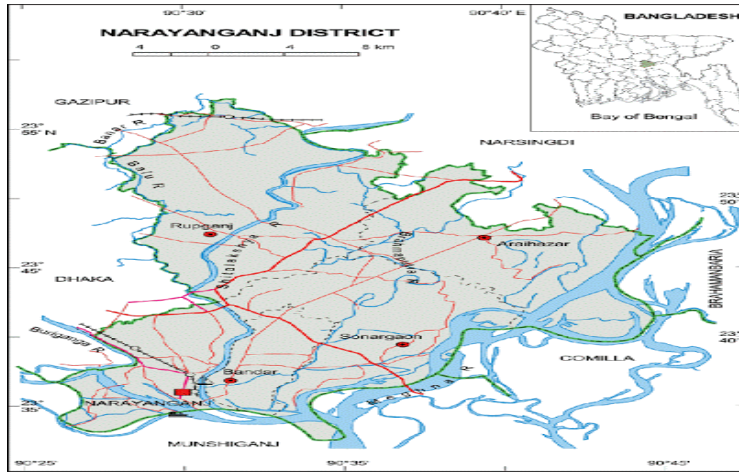


Figure 1.2 Map of Narayanganj district with five Upazilas (Narayanganj sadar, Bondor, Araihaaz, Rupgonj and Shonargaon)

Source: <http://mapofbangladesh.blogspot.dk/2011/09/narayanganj-district.html>

Shonargaon is a rural area situated in the Narayanganj district. The district of Narayanganj is an industrial area beside the river port. It is the main industrial zone of knit garments in Bangladesh. Besides knit garments, the other industries process ready-made garments, jute, food, cement, brick and beverage industry. This Upazila is situated 21 kilometers from Narayanganj district headquarter. Being 27 kilometers from the capital Dhaka and 21 kilometers from the district headquarter (Narayanganj) provides the population of Shonargaon with an opportunity for employment in the industrial sector. But unfortunately, the poverty rate of Narayanganj (consisting of five upazilas including Shonargaon) district is however 16-27 per cent according to the poverty map. Therefore, SSNs are operated in this district as poverty reduction programmes.

The choice of Narayanganj was of interest to this research given the fact that it is one of the industrialized upazilas and yet the poverty level is high. It raised the question as to whether only job opportunities contribute towards human development or whether there are other factors that are important. VGD was the largest SSN working in this district (covering all five upazilas). Therefore, VGD (as a SSN) was targeted for analysing the role of SSN for the provision of human development in this area and identify the gaps in SSN operation.

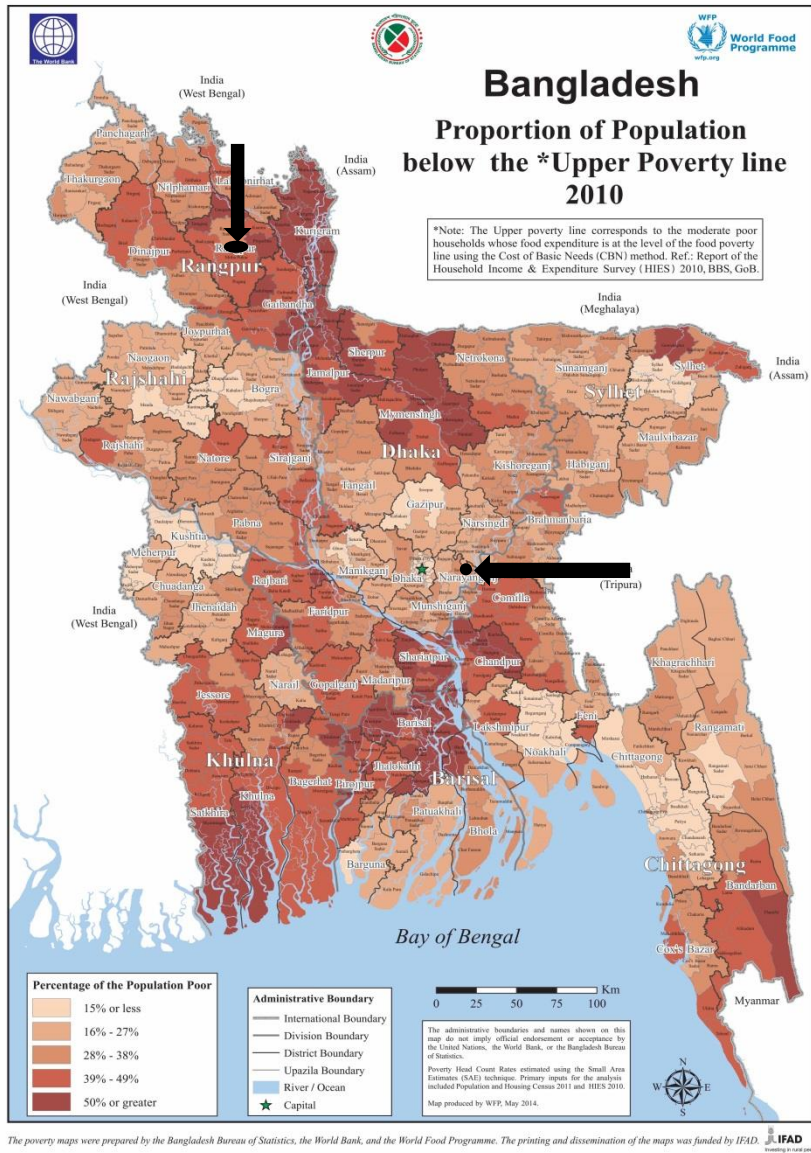


Figure 1.3 Poverty map and data collection areas

Source of poverty map: WB,BBS and WFP (2010) Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Feature%20Story/sar/Bangladesh/Bangladesh-Upper%20Poverty%20Map%202010.jpg>

## FLOW OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is article based. In order to meet the main objective and address the problem and queries it incorporates eight interrelated chapters (including four chapters as overall umbrella of the dissertation and four articles). To make a bridge between the chapters and articles, a slight revision in the chapters (4,5,6,and 7) has been done to link the articles with chapters.

The four chapters (chapter 1, 2, 3 and 8) provide an overview of the social context of the country, conceptual and theoretical approach, operationalization of theories and research methodology. These chapters develop the conceptual background for empirical analysis. The empirical analysis focuses on the four specific research questions presented as articles in chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7.

The introductory chapter gives an overview of the problem area and introduces the theoretical framework of the study. It provides the background, problem and objective of the research and gives a brief description of the research path. Afterwards the second chapter describes the theoretical and conceptual frame of the analysis. This enables an understanding of the social context of the country and how the selected theories are appropriate for analysing the problem. The third chapter describes the research methodology of how the empirical research was carried out.

The overall intention is to explore the role of SSNs in ensuring food security in Bangladesh. As SSNs are poverty reduction development programmes four concepts related to development were targeted. These concepts are outlined as: development obstacles (poverty and gender inequality), development tools (poverty reduction programmes as SSNs) and development components (food security).

The empirical analysis targets the four specific research queries. Four chapters (4, 5, 6, and 7) deal with the empirical part by focusing on a specific question. Each chapter targets a specific question and analyses the problem.

Finally, the concluding chapter combines the exploration of the empirical research (chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) along with the overall background part (chapters 1, 2 and 3) and summarises the findings of the research. Afterwards it discusses how this leads to answering the overall research question and highlights suggestions for future development of poverty reduction programmes in Bangladesh.

## CHAPTER 2. A CRITICAL APPROACH TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF BANGLADESH

The intention of this chapter is to introduce the conceptual meta-theoretical foundation for analysing poverty reduction programmes in the form of SSN and ensuring food security in the context of rural livelihoods in Bangladesh. These considerations consist of the overall ‘stepping stones’ of the study where the most important development theories and approaches will be debated and utilised in order to provide an overall understanding of poverty in a historical and contemporary perspective. In general the study deals with reality and tries to understand the social context and individual impact of poverty reduction programmes and explores the gaps between the strategic objectives and development outcomes.

The importance of applying a meta-theoretical framework has been described by Corbin and Strauss as “*After studying a topic the researcher finds that a previously developed framework is closely aligned to what is being discovered in the researcher’s present study, and therefore can use it to complement, extend and verify the findings*” (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p.39). This study aim at providing useful insights in development studies by analysing the effect of poverty reduction programmes. To discover the appropriate theory, the point of departure denotes that a contextual understanding of how to tackle poverty has been taken into consideration. The main issue is whether poverty is a symptom or a cause and the following section gives an overview of the often contested general debates in the main literature surrounding the issue of poverty reduction and explains why poverty has fluctuated, waxed and waned within development thinking.

The main concepts involved in this study are poverty, food security, gender and poverty reduction programmes (SSN). Poverty is considered as an obstacle to both local and national development, as obstacle to food security, and a hindrance of well-being. These three concepts, and the issues involved, are multidimensional and therefore refer to several disciplines. These are political science, economics, international relations and public administration. Development studies, is the only discipline which claims to be interdisciplinary and normative, thus indicating the

ability to cover and include such a diverse number of topics and cross-cutting issues.

This chapter is structured in two parts: The first part introduces development studies after World War II with reference to the classics. Many of the conceptual roots of development studies lie in historical analyses of poverty in Western Europe and have, historically speaking, been debated between two main schools of thought i.e. the structuralists and liberals. The theories and ideas from these two schools include *“the separation of the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, the role of charity, poverty as a structural or individual phenomenon, poverty lines, targeting, and welfare dependency—continue to influence contemporary development thinking”* (Hulme 2014, p. 3). This intellectual heritage is recognised in the discussion about modernisation theory and subsequently economic planning and structuralism. Dependency and Marxism are introduced following a more or less chronological order of the dominant theories and thinking about development. Finally neo-liberal theory is introduced and the chapter ends with a discussion and arguments of why the human development approach has been chosen as the overall theoretical framework of the study while using the capability approach for analysis. The second part conceptualises development strategies in the context of Bangladesh and provides an understanding of how capability expansion plays a role in human development.

## PART 1

### DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY: THE MAIN POSITIONS

The historical and scholarly thinking on why and how development and its relationship to poverty takes place can be discussed theoretically based on different schools of thought. A large amount of literature on development was introduced before and after World War II. During the 1950-60s development was mainly understood as growth of the economy by a combination of free markets, savings, investment and foreign borrowing. These liberal theories – later on merged into modernisation theory - were largely replaced by theories about dependency and structural change in the mid-1960s and 1970s as a critique of modernisation theory.

The liberal school of thought is linked to a focus on growth and modernity where urbanisation and increased use of technology in industrialisation are seen as prerequisites for development and hence the eradication of poverty automatically happens through a trickling-down process in the market place. The liberal perspective therefore looks at social changes through an economic vocabulary. This conception is today adopted by many international organisations (World Bank, IMF) and also national governments who measure development through gross



national income per capita (GNI p.c.), gross domestic product (GDP) and gross national product (GNP). This wealth measure as an indication of development assumes that greater wealth created by market forces and the limited role of the state automatically brings benefits such as healthy life, high education and quality life among the population of a country (Willis, 2011).

This kind of thinking can be traced back to the time of Adam Smith (1776). The classical theories of development concentrated on economic development where the market was the dominant actor in development. Key classical theorists such as Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and J.B Say, are examples of scholars who advocated for free trade and a restricted role of the state and collective politics. The focus on individual liberty and free markets was seen as necessary for economies to grow. The suggested minimum interference of the state was based on the belief that the state inhibits initiatives and stifles investment and becomes a hindrance to growth. According to the liberal opinion the state should only ensure sovereignty, protect citizen's rights from being violated by others and keep low the provision of public or collective goods and protect private property rights. The classical liberal thinkers supported individual freedom, for example freedom to practice religion, trade or enterprises and did not support state interference (Rapley, 2007, p.16) since it was assumed that it would automatically lead to people using their creativity, resource and intelligence and through this, individual endeavours and energy would lead to everybody's well-being. By putting maximum effort on resource management, creativity and intellect automatically benefit society and thus poverty gradually disappears.

The neoliberals (based on neoclassical economic theory) also supported less state interference as they did not support the distribution of resources by the state in order to minimise inequality in the society. This argument supported *laissez-faire capitalism* which suggested that this mode of production would work best when left alone. The neoclassical thought was based on the thinking that economic growth can be achieved faster in societies with inequalities as compared to egalitarian societies. They believed in the market as a self-regulating unit that repairs itself naturally whenever there is a breakdown. An example would be the development of an economic depression leading to the slowing down of economic activity which in turn creates unemployment. Neoclassical economy believed that the unemployed contest for fewer jobs and work in low wage to compete with the contestants. As a result, wage rates drop and employers get a better chance to hire more people. This resulted in more earning and increased expenditure of goods and services produced. This results in a cyclical scenario of more production and consumption (Rapley, 2007, p. 16).

The belief in the market as a self-sustaining mechanism of development was challenged after the Wall Street Crash in 1929 and the Great Depression of United States in the 1930s as well as when John Keynes (1936) argued for the emergence

of state investment as a force of economic development. Arguing that free markets cannot be the main force of development alone as stated by Adam Smith, he cited real investment as the key to growth. According to this perception, real investment can create job opportunities which generate wealth. This effect could be reversed in his opinion as a decline in investment would give rise to increased unemployment which then leads to an economic crisis. Keynes acknowledged the market economy, but did not support the idea that a broken market repairs itself naturally. He believed that the high unemployment situation may persist for an indefinite time and suggested that state interference in these conditions is a necessity and advocated for state investment in projects (for example infrastructure building). These types of investment create job opportunities and increase the demand for goods and services and give rise to an increase in production. The increase in production leads the factories to hire more employees and the cycle generates an upward spiral. Later, when the economy improves, the state can recover the loans that had been invested. Ultimately, the argument was that, the state can help in bad times by investing and saving money in good times for improving the economy. An example of the implementation of Keynes argument was the Marshal Plan or European Recovery Programme, where the US provided financial support to Western Europe to invest in infrastructure building from 1948 to 1952 in order to restore the European economy after the Second World War (Willis, 2011). The Keynesian idea was to induce money into the economy. This gradually gave birth to the concept of borrowing so that loans could repair the economy and generate earnings towards a new rise in growth of the economy (Blaug, 1978, p.684-86). This also indicated that Keynes argued against the *laissez faire* concept.

*“In a laissez-faire world, when government does not have the political will to stimulate directly any component of aggregate spending to reduce unemployment, ‘domestic prosperity is directly dependent on a competitive pursuit of export markets’ (Keynes, 1936, p.349). This is a competition in which all nations cannot be winners since for every nation exports are growing faster than imports there must be other nations where imports are growing faster than exports” (Keynes in Davidson, 2002, p.477).*

Basically poverty according to Keynes was seen as lack of income and a lack of access to health and education. Policies aiming at increasing access to these items were to be provided primarily by the state. Different approaches of development came to the fore after the Second World War following Keynes idea. The studies by Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer can be incorporated here. Though the two economists worked differently their ideas had a common link and became known as the Prebisch-Singer thesis. In brief, the idea was to develop the third world countries by increasing exports as a way to maintain the import levels from the first world countries. The suggestion was to increase exports when the import needs increase. These two theorists named this argument as the *declining terms of trade* syndrome (Prebisch, 1950 and Singer, 1950). To make a simple explanation of this

development idea Prebisch and Singer advocated for technical advancements. Compared to a backward economy, prices rise much more in a technically advanced economy. But this argument in practice showed that to import finished goods even at a fixed amount, the country's export needed to increase day by day. And, it was a fact that the price of finished goods increases when people get rich, but the price of primary goods does not change that much. Effectively, they need to increase their export day by day. Therefore, by exporting primary goods the third world countries accrued economic losses which created poverty and more inequality.

This is the time when the *big push* idea emerged in tandem with John Maynard Keynes thinking. Rosenstein-Rodan advocated that a big push in investment and planning by the state can stimulate industrialisation. Agreeing with this concept Nurkse also recommended that a balanced pattern of public investment in third world countries would benefit growth (Rapley, 2007, p. 23) and thus implicitly reduce poverty. These structuralists believed that the third world countries can only grow economically by state action; the state needs to support industrialisation and trade with first world countries. Arthur Lewis theory of development which was later modified by John Fei and Gustav Ranis also supported this idea of state support. According to this perception two different sectors exist in the underdeveloped countries; an overpopulated rural sector and a modern urban industrial sector. They suggested that surplus labour from the densely populated agricultural rural sector can be transferred without any change in the productive output of the industrial sector. The labour wage is cheap in these countries and with support from state industries, increased production using the labour force will lead to further growth and reduce poverty (Todaro and Smith, 2011, p.115). This idea contributes towards development in two ways: it increases employment opportunities and reduces unemployment on the one hand and increases industrial production on the other. The structuralist perspective presented the effect of modernisation on economic development differently from what otherwise became known as the modernisation perspective.

The modernisation theories gave an ideological, if not false assessment of the conditions by which the first world countries had risen and identified what is lacking in the third world countries. Rostow's stages of growth can be cited as a dominant theory. He identified the process of development linked with modernity and suggested to move from a traditional (agriculture based) society to a modern (industrial) society. The argument was mainly based on the proclaimed pathways to success that the developed countries travelled. His argument was that conversion from underdevelopment to development can be achieved by some steps or stages. All countries must go through these stages to become developed. He compared the steps with the movement of an airplane from its start to take-off. The main strategy for the 'take-off' and 'moving stably' in Rostows view was mobilisation of savings (which may be domestic or foreign) for investment for sustainable economic growth (Rostow, 1960). It gave emphasis to how the first world countries trained

their elite, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. In a similar way to the structuralists, modernisation theories supported the idea of physical capital formation but differed in the way that it envisaged pathways or stages by which a first world country took for its economic development through market-based strategies which was very much in accordance to liberal thinking.

As a reaction to modernisation theory, dependency theories emerged during the 1970s. Although the theory first came into light by Paul Barans (1957) writing on *The political economy of growth*, it mostly flourished during the 1970s. While modernisation theorists suggested the first world countries as a guide to the third world, Baran argued that the first world delayed the development of third world countries. He explained that underdeveloped countries' bourgeoisie had a close link with the land elites and used their profits on ostentation rather than investment. This policy of extending the countries' power did not build capital but rather drained the resources which could have been used for development (Rapley, 2007, p. 26). Very similar to Marxist thinking the dependency theories believed that *"the existence and continuance of underdevelopment is primarily due to the historical evolution of a highly unequal international capitalist system of rich country-poor country relationships"* (Todaro and Smith, 2011, p.122). A very dynamic statement by this school of thought was made by Theotonio Dos Santos when he said:

*"By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development"* (Santos,1970, p. 231).

Seen in this perspective poverty was perceived as a symptom and cause of the structurally determined unequal relations between the developing and developed countries.

These opposing theories gave space to the rise of a new and critical approach focusing on human development.

## INTRODUCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Parallel to the previously mentioned structuralist thinking, a new view on development appeared in the 1950-60s. This approach observed that many countries, though achieving the targeted economic growth, could not ensure a better

living standard or an income increase among the majority of the population. These countries achieved their targeted growth rate but did not register change in the living conditions. This view gave a signal that there was something wrong in the parameters used to measure development. The widespread poverty, inequality and rising unemployment gave rise to critics of the wealth and economics based development concept. They viewed poverty as *“a symptom of inequitable social relations and potentially an analytical distraction from the underpinning causes of global inequality. Neo-liberals placed poverty in a subsidiary position, embracing economic growth through market forces as the analytical and policy priority. Poverty would automatically decline as economic growth accelerated. Inequality was not a problem: indeed, for some neo-liberals inequality was desirable, as it fostered competition and contributed to economic efficiency and higher growth rates”* (Hulme 2014, p.4).

Very much in line with Keynes thinking, Sir William Arthur Lewis in 1955 criticised the idea of considering development in economic terms. He suggested that the purpose of development is not only economic growth but rather it is the means through which choices available to people are increased. Later on, Seers (1969) argued that economic development highlights very little about the quality of development:

*“The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development’ even if per capita income doubled”* (Seers, 1969, p.5)

Paul Streeten’s argument on development in 1980 can be also incorporated as a critic of the wealth based development measures. He pointed out that:

*“Development must be redefined as an attack on the chief evils of the world today: malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment and inequality. Measured in terms of aggregate growth rates, development has been a great success. But measured in terms of jobs, justice and the elimination of poverty, it has been a failure or only a partial success”* (Paul P. Streeten in Sharma, 1999, p.54).

In the same vein James Fosters and Amartya Sen (1973) focused on real income as a measure of well-being and argued that well-being is indeed a major component of development. Following the inequality concept Sen developed the capability approach arguing that the capability to function is an ingredient which really matters for well-being. This approach later on merged with the focus on well-being and human development (described below).

Though Lewis, Seer and Sen advocated for a human focused development, the measurement of development in economic terms (or a wealth based concept on calculating an income increase) continued and still dominates development thinking today. The publication of United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR) in 1990 contributed by Mahbub ul Haque and Amartya Sen criticised neoliberal economics as a development indicator and introduced a shift from economic development to human development.

Measuring development with the human development index (HDI) implies that *"The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives."* Sen also described *"Human development, as an approach, is concerned with what I take to be the basic development idea: namely, advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of it."* (UNDP, 2014, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>).

HDI focused on three dimensions of development which were related to well-being: long and healthy life, knowledge and education and a decent living standard. These three dimensions were measured by life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate and gross enrolment rate in primary, secondary and tertiary education and GDP per capita (Willis, 2011, p.7). The HDI indicated that economic measures may not give the same result based on the HDI. For example, according to the HDI list, while most African countries are classified as upper middle income countries, they were placed under medium human development ranking in the HDI index (Willis, 2011, p.8).

The following table 2.1 indicates a comparison of development measured by economic and human development indicators in the South Asian countries. The table shows a clear difference between the two directions of measurement. It is indicative in all of these countries that the economy has not been able to ensure quality life of its citizens. For example, where Bangladesh has been placed in the rank of 58 according to GDP growth, the HDI index (considering high inequality and vulnerability in the country) places the country in position 142 in its development status.

Table 2. 1 Comparison between development measures

	Ranking based on GDP (2013)	Ranking based on (2013)	HDI
<b>Afghanistan</b>	70	169	
<b>Bangladesh</b>	58	142	
<b>Bhutan</b>	107	136	
<b>India</b>	168	135	
<b>Nepal</b>	109	145	
<b>Pakistan</b>	44	146	
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	10	73	

[Developed by author based on Human development report (UNDP, 2014) available at <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf> and World development indicator database, 2014, World Bank, available at- <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>]

Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) claimed that income may be an important resource for well-being and implicitly for poverty eradication and/or reduction, but there are other components which may not be acquired by income (such as being healthy and being able to make own choices). Therefore, he recommended that instead of focusing on income that might facilitate a good life, the focus should be on individuals actual living and the way they manage to achieve well-being and *freedom* that enables them to manage a life which they want to live (Sen in Tao, 2013, p.3). In his book *Development and freedom*, he identified *freedom* as an essential component of well-being and noted that, “*Economic growth cannot be sensibly treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy*” (Sen, 2000, p. 14).

But while mentioning *freedom* as an essential component of development he developed the concept of *real freedom* and suggested that for development, expansion of real freedom (which people enjoy) is needed.

*“Focusing on human freedom contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advancement, or with social modernisation. Growth of GNP or of individual incomes can, of course, be very important as a means to expanding the freedoms*

*enjoyed by the members of the society. But freedom also depends on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements (for example, facilities for education and healthcare) as well as political and civil rights (for example, the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny)’’ (Sen, 2000, p.3).*

This concept of *freedom as development* provided a new dimension in the development literature acknowledging wealth and equality, but adding a new element of *real freedom*, as a dimension of development.

In a nutshell the following table 2.2 shows the historical concepts and approaches of development from 1950 onwards.

Table 2.2 Development approaches in different periods

Decade	Development approaches	Main concept	Focus
<b>1950s</b>	1.Modernisation theory,  2. Structuralist theory.	1.All countries should follow first world country model 2. Limit the interaction with first country for rising domestic economic growth of the third world countries.	Income level
<b>1960s</b>	1.Modernisation theory 2. Dependency theory	2.Third world countries are poor as a result of exploitation of first world countries	Level of income reflected in macro-economic indicators (gross national product per head)
<b>1970s</b>	1. Dependency theory 2. Basic need approach  3. Neo Malthusian theory	2. Policies in poor countries should focus on providing basic needs of citizens. 3. Economic, population growth and use of resource should be controlled for avoiding ecological and financial disaster. 4. Different effects of development ways for men and women	Income poverty, basic need, government policy and gender.



	4. Women and development		
<b>1980s</b>	1. Neo liberal theory  2. Grass root approaches 3. Sustainable development  4. Gender and development	1. Free market where state should keep out from direct involvement in economic activities. 2. Need of considering local context 3. Need to balance needs with environment and population. 4. Ways in which gender is associated in development	Income, Incorporation of non-monetary aspects in development as vulnerability, shocks, entitlement, gender.
<b>1990s</b>	1. Neo liberal theory 2. Sustainable development 3. Culture and development 4. Gender and development	3. How development affect different culture and social groups differently	Income, Poverty, well-being, human development
<b>2000s</b>	1. Neo liberal theory  2. Globalisation 3. Sustainable development 4. Grassroots approach	1. Engagement with globalisation concepts 2. merger of national economies into a single worldwide system	Income, poverty, gender, inequality, human development

Developed by author based on (Maxwell, 1999, p.2 and Willis, 2005, p.28)

The above discussion on the historical movement of development theories indicates that development should be considered as a multidimensional process for economic growth, reducing inequality and eradicating poverty. It should involve major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions (Todaro and Smith, 2011, p.16). There is no doubt that economic growth is essential for development, but if it leads to high inequality it cannot be sustainable. Without meeting the basic needs of citizens of a country quality life cannot be achieved.

Moreover, development cannot be attained in cases where inequality and obstacles to achieve basic needs persist.

Therefore this thesis rests on the assumption on human well-being as a foundation for sustainable development. It also trusts that poverty reduction is possible by utilising a rights based approach along with an overall focus on human development.<sup>13</sup> Historical evidence – also from the Western countries indicates that growth does not automatically trickle-down to the poor. There is a contrast between one-dimensional and multidimensional approaches where the latter operates with a broader notion of poverty as a set of material and non-material deprivations (Hulme 2014, p. 4).

The human development and capabilities approach uses poverty reduction programmes as strategies of development. Social protection and empowerment programmes are developed with the aim of protecting people from the poverty trap. According to the United Nations (2011) social protection programmes are a means for ensuring food security, health service and well-being.

*“Social transfers are the most powerful tool that a country has to redistribute income and combat poverty. It has a direct impact on poverty, inequality, on social and economic development. Without investing in basic social protection you can’t grow at all. People that are hungry, people that are unhealthy, kids that haven’t been educated well and haven’t been nourished well will never be able to be productive and will never be able to have productive jobs and well-paid jobs in the formal economy. Without a basic investment in their health, their nutrition, and their well-being you will never be able to unblock economic growth to the extent we could.”*

(Cichon, 2011, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37532&Cr=labour&Cr1=#.VOIODXu4J2B>).

This study therefore explores the impact of poverty reduction programmes for development, highly inspired by the arguments promoted by “*development as freedom*” (Sen, 2000), and focuses on the role of *capabilities* (considering freedom as a capability) for human development (which will be discussed more detailed later on). Therefore the capability approach (CA) will be used as the basic theory under the overall framework of the human development approach (HDA) for observing and analysing social issues to debate on the highly disputed measures of

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<sup>13</sup> The rights based approach trusts that human beings are the key actors for their own development. In addition it acknowledges “*that duty-bearers have responsibility to enable rights-holders to recognize and exercise their rights*” (Cohen and Bedeaux, 2014, p.75). This approach is a useful mean of addressing inequality by empowering marginalised groups (Cohen and Bedeaux, 2014).

development. The study aims to explore the role of poverty reduction programmes for the means of development where food security has been taken as the generic variable. The research targets poor women as a deprived part of the population because of their vulnerability towards poverty and food insecurity and the existing gender gap in Bangladesh and explores the extent of poverty reduction programmes in the form of SSNs for ensuring food security among the deprived population. Taking this into consideration, the CA of Amartya Sen is applied as the main conceptual tool used to operationalize the empirical analysis. In addition the capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum will also be taken into account in order to assist in addressing the gender dimension.

This research places CA as a critical theory of development. CA is useful as it is applicable in both empirical and theoretical evidences. At the same time it gives an ample argument for why it is more fruitful to utilise human development as an alternative to a narrow focus on economic growth. Additionally, it opens up for both subjective and objective understandings of poverty and also combines structuralist approaches emphasizing inequality with human development based concepts and goals. Whether poverty may be seen as a symptom of lack of economic growth or a cause of inequality remains to be seen but the human development approach is an attempt to synthesise the two opposing views and will provide the meta-theoretical framework for understanding poverty reduction programmes dealing with deprivation in Bangladesh.

The following sections will discuss the basic concepts of CA of both Sen and Nussbaum and explain the reasons for choosing this theory and how it will be operationalised.

## THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

The capability approach (CA) developed by Amartya Sen can be defined as a critical response towards various approaches of well-being measurement, criticizing the ‘information base’ on which well-being is perceived. While welfare economics concentrates on income as the main information base for well-being, Sen (acknowledging income as an indicator) argues that income cannot alone directly ensure components of well-being as being healthy, being food secure or being able to choose a job etc. (Sen 1992, p.33). Thus instead of focusing on the means that facilitate a good life, the focus should go on actual living which an individual can manage and achieve. He argues that to achieve a desirable life people need *freedom* to go for *functioning* (the valuable beings and doings) and the *capabilities* (opportunities or substantive freedom) that an individual can have for realizing these *functioning*’s (Tao, 2013, p.3).

*“It should be clear that we have tended to judge development by the expansion of substantive human freedoms — not just by economic growth (for example, of the gross national product), or technical progress, or social modernization. This is not to deny, in any way, that advances in the latter fields can be very important, depending on circumstances, as ‘instruments’ for the enhancement of human freedom. But they have to be appraised precisely in that light — in terms of their actual effectiveness in enriching the lives and liberties of people —rather than taking them to be valuable in themselves” (Dre`ze and Sen, 2002, p. 3).*

CA proposes that “social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve the functioning they value” (Alkair, 2008, p 2). Sen’s framework of CA distinguishes utility, human capability, *functioning* and commodities. The major difference between one’s capacity and capability is that capacity is an existing ability whereas capabilities are the inner potentials which come out and can be improved by techniques such as learning, training and so on. Sen’s capability approach introduces a bridge between a person’s capability and her ability to convert the capability into *functioning* (Sen, 1985).

## **CAPABILITY, FUNCTIONING AND FREEDOM**

CA rests on the basic concepts of *capability*, *functioning* and *freedom*. These three concepts are used in assessing the well-being of an individual where, “*well-being of a person can be seen in terms of the quality (the wellness, as it was) of the person’s being*” (Sen, 1992, p.39). CA considers a set of interrelated *functioning’s* as a constituent of living or lifestyle of a person and is reflected by the being and doing of an individual. As an example of being and doing, Sen illustrates *functioning* as “*being adequate nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality etc., to much more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in community, and so on*” (Sen, 1992, p. 39). According to this approach *functionings* are “*various things a person may value doing or being*” (Alkire, 2012, p25) and hence the *functioning* of an individual is viewed as an achievement.

*Capability* to function is very closely related to the concept of *functioning*. It is considered as a ‘set of vectors’ of *functioning*. For example a ‘budget set’ gives a person *freedom* in the commodity space to buy the commodities she values, similarly capability set in the *functioning* space gives *freedom* to a person to select her valuable living option (Sen, 1992, p.40). Therefore, *capability* is a reflection of an individual’s *freedom* for achieving the *functioning’s* she values. As *functioning* is a constituent of well-being, the *capabilities* represents the *freedom* of a person to achieve well-being (Sen, 1992, p.49). CA considers *freedom* as an essential element which is ensured by *capabilities*. Figure 2.1 gives an example of *capabilities* and *functioning*.

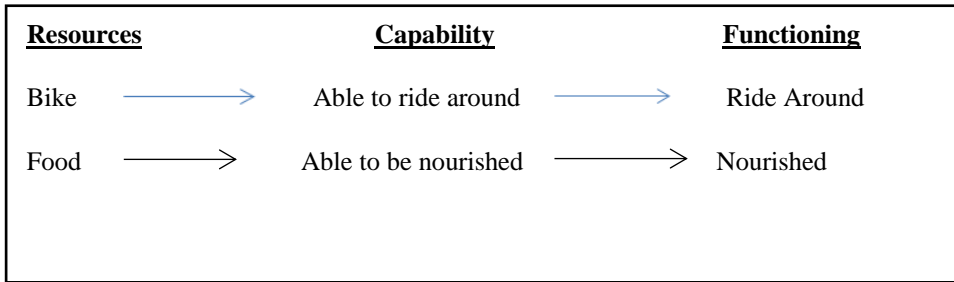


Figure 2.1 Capability and functioning

(Alkire, S, 2012, p. 27) Available at <http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SS12-CA-Intro.pdf>

*Freedom* in Sen's approach indicates the real opportunities a person receives to accomplish what she values or wants (Alkire, 2012, p.31). What a person will choose rather than what he or she gets, reflects the person's freedom of choosing what types of opportunities he or she wants (Sen, 1992). Sen also describes *capabilities* as freedom, which refers to the existence of the individual's valuable choices or alternatives. In another way, *capabilities* can be identified as the real freedom of an individual. For example, while travelling can be categorised as a *functioning*, the opportunity to travel is the *capability*. The woman who is not travelling may or may not be able to travel. *Capability* tries to capture the fact of whether she can travel if she wants or not. Therefore, the distinction between capability and *functioning* can be mentioned as the effective possibility which indicates achievement on the one hand and freedom on the other hand (Robeyns, 2012, p.2).

## CONVERSION FACTORS IN CA (MEANS VERSUS FUNCTIONING)

CA clearly distinguishes between the means (goods and services) on one hand, and capability and *functioning* on the other (Robeyns, 2005, p. 98). It acknowledges that a person and the environment they are living in are also important for their *functioning*. This means that the received or owned good cannot only enable a person towards well-being. The relation of commodities and the *functioning* to achieve 'being' and 'doing' can be classified as conversion factors (Robeyns, 2005). The conversion factors play a role in converting characteristics of the goods to individual *functioning*. Marketable goods or non-marketable goods can be placed in the criteria of conversion factors when they develop certain interests of individuals for their characteristics. For example, an individual may be interested in a bicycle not for its appearance but for its utility function. Here, the characteristics of the bike to move and carry contribute towards *functioning* of the individual who

knows how to bike. Conversion factors therefore capture the relation between the commodity and achievement of *functioning*. They are means by which an individual can transform a resource to *functioning*. Figure 2.2 shows a person's capability set

and the social and personal context (Robeyns, 2005, p. 98).

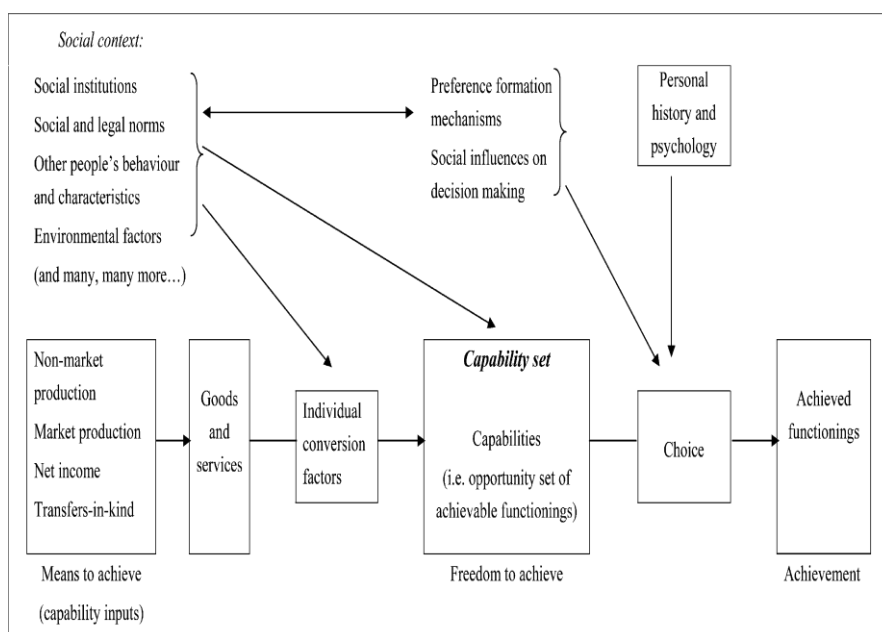


Figure 2.2 A stylised non-dynamic representation of a person's capability set and her social and personal context

Robeyns (2005, p. 99) identified three types of conversion factors which play a role in converting the commodities to *functioning*.

1. **Personal conversion factors:** These factors are “*metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills and intelligence*” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99). These factors influence how a person can convert the characteristics of a good or commodity to *functioning* (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99). For example, a physically disabled person or a person who has never learned how to

drive or ride will not drive a car or ride a bicycle and this commodity will not enable her *functioning* to mobility.

2. **Social conversion factors:** Example of these factors are “*public policies, social norm, discriminating practices, gender roles, societal hierarchies, power relation*” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99).
3. **Environmental conversion factors:** These factors are for example “*climate, geographical location*” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99).

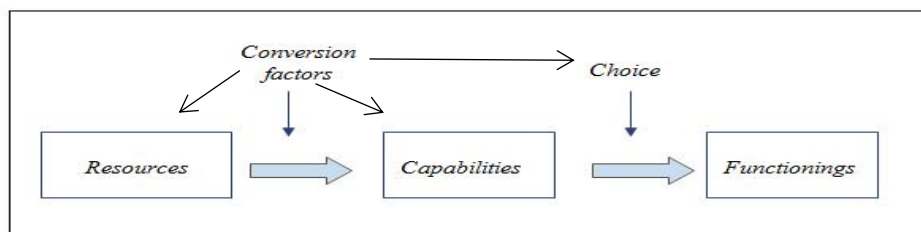


Figure 2.3 Analytical framework of CA: Relationship between resources, capabilities and functionings (Based on verd and Lopex, 2011, p.9)

In practice, CA is not only applied in empirical research but also in critical analysis, for example, it can be applied in order to criticise existing social policy or empirical findings (Robeyns, 2006, p.358). This makes the approach important in the study and analysis of poverty and well-being in developing countries. CA has been applied to assess human development of countries, small scale development projects, identification of poor in developing countries, poverty and well-being assessment in advanced economies, deprivation of disabled people, assessing policies, gender inequalities and many other cases of development and measurement of human agency (Robeyns, 2006).

## SEN'S CA AND AGENCY

Sen's CA uses agency and freedom in two important roles. Both of these concepts are designed by a number of crosscutting distinctions. The first difference goes between two interrelated but irreducible states of an individual which are agency and well-being. The second difference is made between achievement and freedom dimension of the two issues (agency and well-being). Therefore, the two different dimensions of agency and well-being allude to four concepts namely, (1) agency achievement (2) well-being achievement (3) agency freedom and (4) well-being freedom (Sen, 2009, p. 287).

## AGENCY ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL-BEING ACHIEVEMENT

*Agency achievement* is defined as “the realization of goals and values she has reason to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being, and...refers to the person’s success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives” (Sen, 1992, p.56). *Agency achievement* may not always contribute towards a person’s own *well-being achievement* as it can be for the well-being of a broader context. For example, if the aim of an individual is to achieve the independence of her country or such a general goal, then the person’s agency achievement may not always contribute to her own well-being. In this case *agency achievement* does not ensure an individual’s own *well-being achievement* (Sen, 1992, p.57). Therefore, an individual’s agency achievement is her “success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives” (Sen, 1992, p.56), they might include own well-being such as being well-nourished, being healthy or protecting environment, contributing in peace keeping, indicative that achievement of these agencies can be enhancing or diminishing for her own well-being. However, these goals must be chosen by the individual - not by others. CA is concerned with an individual’s agency in all spheres of life such as political, social, economic and so on (Keleher, 2014, p.56).

Therefore, agency success can be achieved when an individual achieves or gains her agency objectives. There are two types of this agency success in CA namely: (1) *Realized agency success* and (2) *Instrumental agency success* (Sen, 1992, p.5). The *realized agency success* (RAS) is achieved when an individual’s goals or objectives are realised, whether she may or may not play any role in this achievement. On the other hand, *Instrumental agency success* (IAS) will be achieved if an individual plays a role in achieving her objectives. For example, Susane is a social worker who is appointed to reduce the violence against women in village A. But her personal objective is to reduce the violence in village A and the neighbouring village B as well. If the violence against women in both of the villages reduces, under Sen’s consideration, RAS has been achieved, but IAS will be achieved only in the case of village A.

## AGENCY FREEDOM AND WELL-BEING FREEDOM

An individual’s *agency freedom* is her “freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce” (Sen, 1992, p.57). This agency freedom may enhance or diminish a person’s own well-being. For example a woman (Fatema) may have an objective to promote women’s rights in the rural areas of developing countries where women are treated as subordinate to men. Fatema takes an initiative to achieve this goal by disseminating knowledge regarding women’s rights provisions to the illiterate rural women for their awareness building. To attain this objective she may face several obstacles from



different directions which may affect her security or well-being. But her effort or success in doing this reflects her agency freedom which may or may not affect her well-being.

*Well-being freedom* is an individual's "*freedom to achieve those things that are constitutive of one's well-being*" (Sen, 1992, p.57). Hence, *well-being freedom* reflects an individual's capability set, while *agency freedom* has a board area to cover such as state affairs and so on (Sen, 1992, p.57). An individual's *well-being freedom* is her capability to attain various mixtures of *functioning's* from her capability set. In other words, the capability set embodies several lifestyles that she is able (empowered) to achieve. This freedom in Sen's view is an important component of well-being. This indicates that an individual may have the same *functioning* but their well-being freedom may be different. To make this clear, let's consider two person's well-being freedom. An actress A has plenty of food and is empowered to take decision what food to eat, but decides to fast in order to lose her weight and becomes malnourished. On the other hand, person B is extremely poor and does not have any option other than starving and becomes malnourished. In both of the cases the *functioning* are the same, but person A is more empowered than B as she has the freedom of taking decisions for her own satisfaction. This therefore is a wellness of her being and indicates her well-being freedom.

Sen's CA proposes that empowerment is a process towards expanding an individual's well-being freedom and set of valuable capabilities (Keleher, 2014, p.62).

### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, AGENCY AND WELL-BEING**

Sen finds a close link between well-being and the agency role of women. He indicates that the active agency of a woman rectifies inequalities and ensures well-being. Agency role therefore should be concerned with the well-being discussion. Likewise, thinking from the opposite direction, enhancing well-being of women cannot be ensured without agency. A substantial interlink is subsequently present between these two issues where Sen identifies a person with active agency as an *agent* of development (Sen, 2010, p. 190).

According to his approach, agency role makes an individual responsible and does not only indicate the well-being but also gives the ability of doing or refusing an act or choosing an act which makes a difference in their lives. Therefore, it is very important to reduce the relative deprivation in well-being of women especially in developing countries like Asia and North Africa where there is a high mortality rate amongst women. Sen calls this phenomenon *missing women* in the sense that the women die due to gender biases in health care distribution and other necessary support (Sen, 2010, p. 191).

Women's well-being is influenced by their earning power, economic role outside the family, ownership of property, literacy and so on. All these variables of well-being have a common thing which is "*their positive contribution in adding force to women's voice and agency - through independence and empowerment*" (Sen, 2010, p. 191). Clearly put, women working outside the house and having an independent income enhance their social standing not only within their families but also in the society. These women can contribute more visibly to the fortunes of their families. Moreover, by earning extra money, they achieve a voice because they reduce their dependence. Working outside the household also gives a woman exposure to the outer world and enhances her knowledge. Earning also gives her the opportunity to own property thereby increasing her abilities to make decisions.

Agency achievement has multiple effects. For example, around the lives of women there are other lives closely connected with theirs. These may include the lives of their husbands and children. Evidence shows that women's agency can reduce child mortality rates and violence against women (Sen, 2010, p.193). In developing societies, men are considered as the breadwinners who are capable of making decisions and the economic power they attain reflects in the family distribution system. This perception gives rise to the unequal distribution of food and healthcare facilities to women. Being able to earn and contribute in the economic system of the family tends to enhance the relative position of women in the household and helps ensuring proper distribution within the family. Furthermore, this role provides women with freedom, which helps in reducing relative and absolute deprivation (Sen, 2010, p.194).

Another achievement for women having an agency role is attributed to the decrease in fertility rates. Fertility rates tend to take a downward trend in the case of empowered women. This can be justified by the fact that an empowered woman is able to take her own decisions with regard to childbearing thereby affecting the frequency with which she may bear children. Furthermore, evidence from India shows that literacy and employment made a major difference in fertility rates (Sen, 2010, p.195).

There are also considerable evidences that literacy among women contributes to a decrease in child mortality. There is a close caring bondage and attachment between mother and child. When women achieve the power of decision-making and earning they can take necessary steps for their child's wellness independently. Basic gender statistics from countries such as, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran and countries in North Africa shows higher mother and child mortality, whereas developed countries in Europe and America have substantial survival advantage where gender inequality is not pronounced (Sen, 2010, p.195).

The above discussion indicates therefore that "*the changing agency of women is one of the major mediators of economic and social change, and its determination as*

*well as consequences closely relate to many of the central features of the development process*" (Sen, 2010, p.202). So, empowered women can contribute towards development process as an agent of change.

## CRITICAL VIEWS AND STRENGTHS OF SEN'S CA

CA has emerged as a leading approach of observing poverty, inequality and human development. But it has been criticised from several angles. Critique on CA is mainly targeted at the question of *'how far Sen's framework is operational?'* (Sugden, 1993, p. 1953). This criticism points out two major weaknesses in the approach. The first indicate the need for a coherent list of valuable capabilities and the second shows doubt on the usefulness of its application in rethinking poverty, inequality and policy analysis.

The first issue was supported by others (Williams, 1987, p.96; Nussbaum, 1988, p.176; Qizilbash, 1998, p. 54) who raised the point that, although Sen has mentioned valuable capabilities, he has not provided a list of important capabilities. Some thinkers (Nussbaum, 1990, 2000, 2003; Alkair and Black, 1997; Desai, 1995; Robeyns, 2003; Clark, 2002, 2006a) supporting this argument also tried to complete the approach by developing a list of capability sets for applying in the framework. Among these thinkers Nussbaum's set of capabilities as *Central human capabilities* is an influential effort in completing CA. According to Nussbaum the list is subjected to an ongoing revision and her latest list consists of ten capabilities. These are: (1) life (2) bodily Health (3) bodily integrity (4) senses, imagination and thought (5) emotions (6) practical reason (7) affiliation (8) other species (9) play and (10) control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-42). She notes that the list *"isolates those human capabilities that can be convincingly argued to be of central importance in any human life, whatever else the person pursues or chooses"* (Nussbaum, 2000, p.74) and mentions it as *"years of cross cultural discussion"* (Nussbaum, 2000, p.76). She also asserts that the list provides political principles which should be incorporated in the Constitution, human rights legislation and development policy (Nussbaum, 1995, p.87).

Acknowledging the promising outcomes of this theory, David Clark argues that *"in practice there are times when one might want to challenge the motives for encouraging 'value rejection' in poor countries. In the end it seems that we must accept any genuine rational assessment of [local] values that local people see fit to provide. In other words it is not so much the method itself that is fraught but its potential for abuse"* (Clark, 2005, p.7). Moreover, Nussbaum's started developing the list from 1990 and it is evident that the main categories have not changed except for the addition of descriptions and or their reorganization. However, looking back to the first list reveals that it has been derived from Aristotle's writing (Clark, 2005, p.7). At the same time, other thinkers have described the list as paternalistic for an American philosopher to determine capabilities for other cultures and societies

(Stewart, 2001, p.1192). Gasper (2004, p.187) views the list “*not as a headcount of present day opinions, but as a hypothesis about what would over time become an acceptable starting point for discussions in each society, as a rational interpretation, implication and evolution of their values*”.

Sen himself responding to the criticism of listing the capabilities notes that: “*The problem is not with listing important capabilities, but with insisting on one predetermined canonical, list of capabilities, chosen by theorists without any general social discussion or public reasoning. To have such a fixed list, emanating entirely from pure theory, is to deny the possibility of fruitful public participation on what should be included and why.....public discussion and reasoning can lead to a better understanding of the role, reach and significance of particular capabilities*” (Sen, 2004, p.77, 80).

Alkire (2002) identifies the flexibility of Sen’s framework as its strength and supports the argument of Sen that the selection and weighting depends on an individual’s or society’s value judgment.

The second point of criticism cast doubt on the usefulness of its application in rethinking poverty, inequality and policy analysis (Sugden, 1993; Rawls, 1999). According to Robert Sugden, “*Given the rich array of functioning’s that Sen takes to be relevant, given the extent of disagreement among reasonable people about the nature of the good life, and given the unresolved problem of how to value sets, it is natural to ask how far Sen’s framework is operational. Is it a realistic alternative to the methods on which economics typically rely - measurement of real income, and the kind of practical cost- benefit analysis which is grounded in Marshallian consumer theory?*” (Sugden, 1993, p.1953). Similarly, John Rawls also identified CA as “*an unworkable idea*” (Rawls, 1999, p.13).

In practice CA has been used in both empirical and theoretical research and applications are based on analytical reasoning and critical analysis (Robeyns, 2006, p.358). Ingrid Robeyns has specified nine different types of CA application as “*General assessments of the human development of a country; assessment of small scale development projects; identification of the poor in developing countries; poverty and well-being assessments in advanced economies; an analysis of deprivation of disabled people; the assessment of gender inequalities; theoretical and empirical analysis of policies; critiques on social norms; practices and discourses; and finally, the use of functioning s and capabilities as concepts in non-normative research*”(Robeyns, 2006, p. 360-361). CA has been applied by several researchers to analyse the above mentioned areas (UNDPs Human development reports, Alkire, 2002; Reddy and Pogge, 2009, Kabeer, 2015).

CA is not limited to the market as it observes human’s doing and being. Economists often argue that development needs to pay attention to the processes and outcomes

in both market and nonmarket economies (Himmelweit, 2000). For example, while paying attention to the income, earning or employment status it also observes the capability of human towards *functioning* (outcome). Therefore, the inequality analysis becomes more dependable as only concentrating on market economy can miss some important aspects of well-being. For example, a single focus on an individual's resource or earning can be misleading to inequality analysis. Observing individuals capabilities such as education, socialisation, health condition along with earning provides more space for understanding her lifestyle which gives an impression of her well-being. CA therefore provides clarity of the objective. For example, freedom for valuable doings and beings are important factors in order to achieve development according to CA. It believes that this freedom enables women to further elaborate their doings (for example social investment, participation and so on) which will sustain their well-being.

The concept of focusing on real freedoms gives the opportunity to observe a human agency. Concentrating on peoples doing and being along with organisations (such as market, institution, government) activity, will enable a researcher to analyse human agency considering other surrounding factors. According to Dreze and Sen (2002 page 6) *“The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom. The word ‘social’ in the expression, ‘social opportunity’ (...) is a useful reminder not to view individuals and their opportunities in isolated terms. The options that a person has depend greatly on relations with others and on what the state and other institutions do. We shall be particularly concerned with those opportunities that are strongly influenced by social circumstances and public policy...”*

Considering the previous discussion, this research employs CA as an operational and conceptual tool for development programme analysis and valuable in exploring human agency for well-being.

## CA AS A NON INDIVIDUALISTIC APPROACH

The next section will describe the operationalization of CA. But, before entering the framework another issue should be elaborated and discussed to make this understanding clear. CA has been criticised as an individualistic approach (Stewart, 2005, Gore, 1997). Thus considering this criticism, it is important to elaborate how CA as a critical theory is going to work as a collective or societal approach. To answer this question the standing of this research needs to be expounded.

At first sight the CA may seem ethically as an individualistic approach as it concentrates on individual's capabilities and *functioning*. But at the same time, CA

is not ontologically individualistic as it also focuses upon the social and environmental conversion factors that take into account social features (for example, societal norms and discriminatory practices). In other words, CA considers individual well-being to be indivisible to the surrounding circumstances she lives in. Therefore, its dual character of ethically being individualistic and ontologically being non-individualistic provides desirable features for well-being analysis (Robeyns, 2003, p. 65).<sup>14</sup> This dual feature enables the well-being analysis to focus on individuals, without denying the impact of the social and environmental influences. In this sense *“The capability approach embraces ethical individualism, but does not rely on ontological individualism”* (Robeyns, 2003a, p. 44).

Moreover, in response to the question whether CA is individualistic the argument of Qizilbash (2014) can be stated here:

*“It is certainly true that Sen notes the importance of some functioning’s which have a social dimension such as appearing in public without shame, being socially integrated and participating in the life of the community. So the people he has in mind in his account are clearly conceived in such a way that they can be fully engaged in social or community life. In the case of a functioning such as ‘appearing in public without shame’, it is also clear that filling out how this may or may not be realised may depend on social context and norms. Applications of the approach which focus on this functioning (see, for example, de Herdt 2008) inevitably discuss local norms and context. So in both the informed desire view and the capability approach, the social dimension emerges as central when one fills out the content of a good life in a particular context. Indeed, in the capability approach, one argument for keeping the list of functioning s open-ended is to allow for the*

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<sup>14</sup> *“Ethical individualism makes a claim about who or what should count in our evaluative exercises (Is it intentionally capital?) and decisions. It postulates that individuals and only individuals are the units of moral concern. In other words, when evaluating different states of social affairs, we are only interested in the (direct and indirect) effects of those states on individuals..... at its core is the claim that all social phenomena are to be explained wholly and exclusively in terms of individuals and their properties”* (Bhargava,1992 in Robeyns,2003a, p.44). While ontological individualism *“states that only individuals and their properties exist, and that all social entities and properties can be identified by reducing them to individuals and their properties. Ontological individualism hence makes a claim about the nature of human beings, about the way they live their lives and about their relation to society. In this view, society is built up from individuals only, and hence is nothing more than the sum of individuals and their properties”* Robeyns (2003a, p. 44).

*approach to be filled out differently across various social contexts. Do these accounts of well-being fail to recognise the way in which people's values and desires are shaped by society?" (Qizilbash, 2014, p. 174).*

Smith and Steward (2009, p. 214) also incorporated the relational nature of CA as *"conceptualizing and incorporating the social aspects of capabilities requires a basic understanding of how societies and individuals together constitute capabilities.....Sen's notion of capabilities and freedoms implies an ontology of relational society. Within a relational conception of society, a particular capability is the outcome of the interaction of an individual's capacities and the individual's position relative to others in society"*.

Robeyns (2003a, p. 44) described this relational nature of CA as *"on the theoretical level, the capability approach does account for social relations and the constraints and opportunities of societal structures and institutions on individuals in two ways. First, by recognising the social and environmental factors which influence the conversions of commodities into functioning s. The second way in which the capability approach accounts for the societal structures and constraints is by theoretically distinguishing functioning's from capabilities"*.

Sen himself has elaborated his standing in this regard as *"The [capability] approach used in this study is much concerned with the opportunities that people have to improve the quality of their lives. It is essentially a 'people-centred' approach, which puts human agency (rather than organizations such as markets or governments) at the centre of the stage. The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom. The word 'social' in the expression 'social opportunity' (...) is a useful reminder not to view individuals and their opportunities in isolated terms. The options that a person has depend greatly on relations with others and on what the state and other institutions do. We shall be particularly concerned with those opportunities that are strongly influenced by social circumstances and public policy..." (Drèze and Sen 2002, p. 6).*

Based on these statements, it is an important point to consider CA as a non-individualistic approach which takes into consideration the social factors surrounding individuals. CA therefore considers the freedom and agency of women constituted by social arrangements allowing women to live well all together (Deneulin and McGregor, 2010, p.510).

## **NUSSBAUM'S CAPABILITIES APPROACH**

Martha Nussbaum in her *Women and human development: The capabilities approach* provides a new kind of international feminism. Supporting Sen's argument on development, she moves to the concrete reality of the struggles that

poor women undergo in societies (McReynolds, 2002, p.142). Nussbaum analysed CA from a gender perspective. In her words *“Equity of resources falls short because it fails to take account of the fact that individuals need differing levels of resources if they are to come up to the same level of capability to function. They also have differing abilities to convert resources into actual functioning .....the differences that most interest Sen are social, and connected with entrenched discrimination of various types. Thus, in a nation where women are traditionally discouraged from pursuing an education it will usually take more resources to produce female literacy than male literacy”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.35). Hence, she recommended CA as a valuable approach to contemplating fundamental gender entitlement (Nussbaum, 2003, p.36) by the state through a country’s Constitution (Nussbaum, 2003, p.57). Acknowledging the importance of women’s agency and participation for development in Sen’s theory, Nussbaum indicated the need for a coherent list of valuable capabilities. Therefore, she developed a specific set of capabilities which she addresses as central human capabilities *“as a focus both for comparative quality-of-life measurement and for the formulation of basic political principles of the sort that can play a role in fundamental constitutional guarantees”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.40). Nussbaum argued that CA can provide useful guidance in sex equality, only if a list (tentative and revisable) of most central capabilities can be formulated without which *“no society can lay claim to justice”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.36).

Nussbaum argued that there is a close link between rights and capabilities. According to her view, securing an individual’s right depends on the presence of capabilities. *The right to political participation, the right to religious free exercise, the right of free speech – these and others are all best thought of as secured to people only when relevant capabilities to function are present. In other words, to secure a right to citizens in these areas is to put them in a position of capability to function in that area”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.37). Women face rights-based inequalities in different societies. These include abuses within the family, inequalities in resource distribution, and availed opportunities in areas such as education, work recognition and insult towards bodily integrity. These issues are normally neglected in the traditional laws of some countries. For example, the US Constitution suggests that *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people to peaceably to assemble, and petition the Government for a redress of grievances”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.38). On the other hand some constitutions have specified rights in writing. An example is the Indian Constitution (article 19) in which it is stipulated that *“All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression to assemble peaceable and without arms to form associations or unions ....etc.”* (Nussbaum, 2003, p.38). According to Nussbaum these types of approaches are extremely important for ensuring gender justice. She suggests that all nations incorporate similar types of written laws for ensuring marginalised groups access to equity (Nussbaum, 2003, p.39). Therefore,



she developed a list of capabilities which if incorporated in written laws governments can ensure quality life for the citizens of a country. Nussbaum's list of the central human capabilities includes ten capabilities described in her words as follows:

*“1. **Life** - Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.*

*2. **Bodily Health** - Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.*

*3. **Bodily Integrity** - Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.*

*4. **Senses, Imagination, and Thought** - Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.*

*5. **Emotions** - Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)*

*6. **Practical reason** - Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)*

**7. Affiliation.**

*A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)*

*B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.*

*8. **Other species**- Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.*

*9. **Play**- Being able to laugh, to play to enjoy recreational activities.*

*10. **Control over one's environment**-*

*A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association.*

*B. Material - Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relation-ships of mutual recognition with other workers” (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-42).*

### **AGENCY AND WELL-BEING IN NUSSBAUM’S CA**

Nussbaum’s approach in a similar way to Sen supports the significant role of empowerment which can be represented by agency and expansion of capabilities. Acknowledging the distinction developed by Sen of capabilities and *functioning*, Nussbaum argues that the agency and well-being can be placed in these two concepts. They do not need any separate distinction. Appreciating the important distinctions of agency and well-being by Sen, she argues “*All the important distinctions can be captured as aspects of the capability/functioning distinction*” (Nussbaum, 2000a, p.14). This does not mean that Nussbaum views agency as an unimportant part of the approach because Nussbaum’s list of core human capabilities also have components which are concerned with the ability and making choice of individuals own life and how to live it. Furthermore, she claims that individuals should be seen as “*.....sources of agency and worthy in their own right, with their own plans to make and their own lives to live....deserving of all necessary support for their equal opportunity to be such agents*” (Nussbaum, 2000a, p.58). Her argument supports agency and well-being but she does not want to distinguish these two concepts which she thinks will complicate the approach.

The reasoning based on this conclusion of Nussbaum can be explained in two ways. First, she is “*not sure that any extra clarity is added by using a well-being/agency distinction*” and second she “*fears that the Utilitarian associations of the idea of well-being may cause some readers to suppose that Sen is imagining a way of enjoying well-being that does not involve active doing and being*” (Nussbaum, 2000a , p.14 in Keleher, 2014, p.64). She fears that there are development approaches which consider maximizing utility as development and evaluates it on individual reports of welfare which may often create confusion between well-being with welfare, where well-being may ultimately be treated as welfare. Hence she suggests avoiding the agency/well-being distinction in order to avoid this confusion.

Moreover, Nussbaum argues that the concept of *agency freedom* can be represented by capability. For example, if women have the capability of doing a specific work such as freedom to select and achieve the desired (valuable) *functioning*, then they can be considered as active agents for that specific work. In this example capability

refers to both the freedom of choice and achievement of *functioning*. On the other hand *agency achievement* can also be a version of *functioning* subsets which a woman chooses independently and achieves. Therefore, the agency freedom and agency achievement can be both explained under the concept of capability and *functioning* (Keleher, 2014, p.64).

Lastly, the example of the two ladies' well-being freedom where one chooses to fast and the other having to starve because of lack of food also can be identified as lack of capability in the case of the woman who is starving.

### NUSSBAUM'S APPROACH: STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

The strength of Nussbaum's approach can be described in two dimensions. Firstly the approach provides a basis for reform and addressing inequality in society. The approach is compared on one hand, with forms of subjective welfarism by asking a person's satisfaction and, on the other hand, platonism, by measuring development through the transcendent good, solely liberating peoples desires (McCreynolds, 2002, p.143; Nussbaum, 2000a, p.116-117). Scholars have argued that this approach provides an understanding of actions, meanings and motivations as it pays attention to thoughts and emotions (Gasper and Staveren, 2003 in Robeyens, 2003, p. 25). Secondly, it provides a list of capabilities which are believed to be central entitlements to all citizens for equal justice (Nussbaum, 2003, p.40) and serves as a tool of development measurement and social reform which is sensitive to cultural differences. This provides policy makers with a list of basic constitutional principles which can be the basis for an international human rights movement (McCreynolds, 2002, p.143). However, the approach developed by Nussbaum did not go without criticism, an issue that has been addressed briefly in chapter 2 and will be discussed further in chapter 6.

## OPERATIONALISATION AND APPLICATION OF CAPABILITY APPROACH

### OPERATIONALISATION OF CA

Sabina Alkire (2008) has described the operationalising framework of CA under two headlines as (1) evaluative framework and (2) prospective framework.

The **evaluative framework** in CA employs comparative assessments of situations by comparing capabilities or freedom. It primarily focuses on whether capabilities have expanded or not? It does not search for how and why these expansions occurred or did not occur.

On the other hand the **prospective framework** consists of a working set of policies, programmes or suggestions which are most likely to generate considerable capability expansion - along with the process by which these programmes, policies or suggestions are generated and the context in which they will provide the assistance. Therefore, the second approach relates to development and freedom and also to the human development approach (Alkire, 2008, p.4-5). Analysis under this frame combines an equal emphasis on queries related to the process and cause e.g. why and how. This way the analysis should be constructed according to these guidelines:

*“What incremental changes to existing institutional, social, cultural, political and economic structures would expand certain capabilities, and how durable, equitable, and sustainable such expansions would be. Prospective analysis identify the highly productive investments that will leverage a greater yield of capabilities than alternatives”* (Alkire, 2008, p.6).

The following diagram provides an understanding of both frameworks of CA application

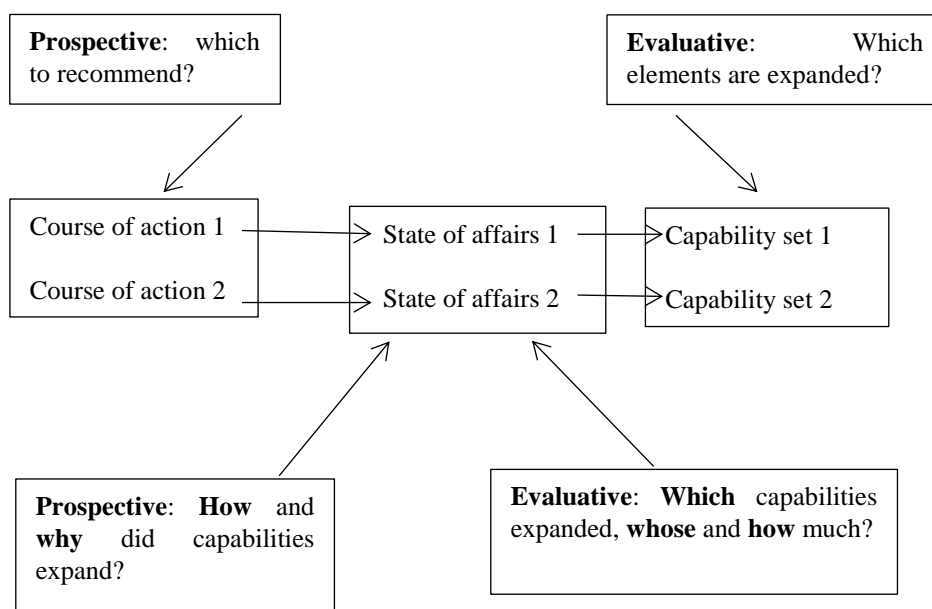


Figure 2.4 Framework of CA application

(Source: Alkire, 2008, p.7)

Alkire herself (2010 a, p. 29) describes the evaluative frame as incomplete as it only initiates an understanding of the grounds by “*which to judge development to be more humane*” not for how development becomes humane. In her words

*“When considering as an evaluative framework, the capability approach constitutes a framework for hearing and assessing various putatively enriching connections between instrumental freedoms and capabilities. Thus the tracing of claimed connections between actions (often to increase instrumental freedom) and human freedoms, and the active comparison of one set of claims with alternative claims, constitute the capability approach in practice.....It leaves capability approach in many cases above the fray, in the seat of judge, not barrister...the assessment of the capability approach in practice appears to turn on whether it can identify and promote alternatives that turn out to be more effective and equitable means of expanding a range of fundamental capabilities. The identification and advocacy of such alternatives has in fact been the aim of Human Development Reports each year”* (Alkire, 2010a, p.29).

In addition, it is necessary for any policy researcher to seek alternative options or policies which will generate a humane economy with greater humane freedom inspired by CA. Therefore, evaluative framework does not help in policy research analysis as it only observes whether the capabilities have been expanded or not by the policy. It does not proceed forward to explore the reasons of capability expansion (or no expansion). Therefore this framework cannot contribute in policy development by identifying the strength and weakness of a policy. Sen, while discussing on methodologies applicable for descriptive, predictive and evaluative research, asserts that the foundation of methodology should be built by “*what serves the goal of inquiry*” (Sen, 2004. P.595). In fact, Sen himself (Dreze and Sen, 2002) in his study applied prospective analysis to explore connections between development actions and human capabilities (this study will be discussed in the next section).

This research also adopts a prospective framework for operationalising CA for its nature of going beyond the evaluative framework to explore the means and causes (how and why) of capability expansion. Thus it provides the space to give attention to social norms, institutions as well as the individual or group. It proceeds to find responses for recommendation by firstly, observing the courses of action, state of affairs and capability set. Secondly it explores how and why (did/or did not) the capability expand. This gives an overall impression of the role of SSNs on ensuring food security. The courses of action were observed by reviewing the existing food security targeted SSN’s operating modalities in Bangladesh (chapter 5) while concentrating on two SSNs (VGD and CFPR) (chapter 6, 7 and 8). The conversion factors (the support provided from the SSNs such as, rice or asset from VGD and CFPR, social and cultural norms as patriarchy and gender inequality) also

influenced the courses of action towards state of affairs. The state of affairs are the functioning which comes from the courses of action. Overall it provides the understanding of how and why the capabilities (by observing real freedom) expanded (or did not expand).

## **APPLICATION OF CA IN INTERNATIONAL AND BANGLADESHI LITERATURE**

This section describes CA's application in different research. It should be mentioned here that CA can be applied in critical analyses, analytical reasoning and empirical research (Robeyns, 2006, p.358). The following discussion provides an overview of the applications of CA in international and Bangladeshi research.

### **Applying CA in International research**

Several types of research have operationalized CA for assessing social policies and projects (e.g. Sen, 1985, Dreze and Sen, 2002, Alkire, 2002, Simon et al, 2013, Stoecklin and Bonvin, 2014).<sup>15</sup> But for this discussion I shall elaborate the research of Dreze and Sen (2002) which provides a strong background and support for this research.

Dreze and Sen's (2002) study was an analysis of development in India where they observed that development was an *"expansion of substantive human freedom – not just by economic growth (for example, of the gross national product), or technical progress or social modernization"* (Dreze and Sen, 2002, p.3). The study focused on the opportunities people had to improve their lives which placed human agency at the centre believing that the objective of social opportunities should be the expansion of human agency and freedom as an end and as a means for further expansion of freedom (Dreze and Sen, 2002, p.4). This research employed a prospective analysis on education in India considering public policy and advocacy priorities in the country. The study projected education as a conversion factor of expanding capabilities and explored the causes of existing low education standards.

The study also interrogated the constitutional commitment of free education for school going children (up to fourteen years) to illuminate how education can be a component of enhancing freedom. Although there was a political commitment to increase educational expenditure, the national figures indicated that the government

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<sup>15</sup> Alkair (2002) used CA to analyse three poverty reduction projects in Pakistan. The projects were evaluated by their capability enhancing criteria. Sen (1985) analysed gender discrimination in India by operationalising CA. Simon et al (2013) operationalised CA to measure outcome of mental health research in England. Analysing children's rights with CA were done in the study of Stoecklin and Bonvin, (2014)

gradually reduced expenditures on education (Dreze and Sen 2002, in Alkire, 2008).<sup>16</sup> Along with these examples the study afterwards proceeded to an example of positive experience (Himachal Pradesh) where school going rates among both boys and girls had increased. In addition it identified the causes of increase in school enrolment.

This study gives a clear example of prospective analysis where it accounts for education and development. Alkire (2008), in a review of this study asserts that: *“It first considered the possible value of education- intrinsically as well as instrumentally- then examined the deprivations that many experience in education, and their causes. Is it that basic education is not valued by relevant group (parents and students)? Are they blocked from taking advantage of it, thus lack the real freedom to be educated although they may have formal access?.....Having diagnosed, as it were, core issues, the analysis turns to actions that people (parents and students as well as public institutions and NGOs) could undertake as agents in order to redress the situation”* (Alkire, 2008, p.18).

The above study is an example of CA’s prospective analysis incorporating the consideration on institutions as well as structures of living which I find extremely useful for my research.

### **Applying CA in Bangladeshi literature**

Under the context of Bangladesh, CA has been used in understanding and exploring the role of policy, services, cultural and social context on human capabilities by various researchers (e.g. Begum, 2015, Forsyth, 2015, Dejaeghere and Lee, 2011, Borg et al 2012, Kabeer, 2015, Kuenning and Amin, 2001).

Begum (2015) describes how the physical and cultural setting of girls in Bangladesh gradually destroys the advantages of education. The article identifies the traditional patriarchal setting as a barrier to the education of girls. She also concentrates on the cultural and social context and observes that: *“It is necessary to ensure a rights-based strategy for women, to have equal access to entitlements and capabilities by strategising a transformative and regenerative system which can make girls and women aware of their own capabilities and worth”* (Begum, 2015, p.761). Similar to this study Dejaeghere and Lee’s (2011) study on understanding educational well-being of marginalized girls and boys utilised CA and analysed it by observing the institutional structure and social conditions.

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<sup>16</sup> “Consider recent trends in public expenditure on education. Judging from election manifestoes, every major political party today is committed to raising public expenditure on education to 6 per cent of GDP. Yet, the ratio of public education expenditure to GDP has actually declined in the nineties under successive governments, from a peak of 4.4 per cent in 1989 to 3.6 per cent or so towards the end of the decade”. (Dreze and Sen, 2002, p.166)

Kabeer and Sulaimans (2015) study explored the impact of an organisation ‘Nijera Kori’ in strengthening capabilities of poor men and women in Bangladesh. The study focused on the political, economic and social impacts of the organisation in exploring the process by which changes occurred. The study used the CA by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Though it was not mentioned directly in the study, CA was utilized in a prospective framework to evaluate the role of the organisation. Analysing the societal context, Constitution and organizational objectives and activities and comparing with other organizational activities (e.g. Grameen bank, ASA) provided an opportunity for the causal exploration (how and why) of capability expansion. The findings concluded that the strategy of ‘Nijera Kori’ acting as an agent of social change rather than service provider (as microfinance organisations) improved the livelihood of the poor (Kabeer and Sulaiman, 2015, p.63).

Kuenning and Amin’s (2001) analysis is devoted to how women’s education is perceived by Bangladeshi people by applying both the CA’s (Sen and Nussbaum) and comparing it with human capital approach. The research interviewed parents and children on attitudes towards schooling in response to a governments incentive programme (Kuenning and Amin, 2001, p.129). The study also focused on the cultural norms of the society which act as barriers to education (e.g. cultural practice as preference related to marriage of young girls is a barrier to the education of girls). The findings express the advantages of applying CA rather than the human capital approach in analysing human well-being.<sup>17</sup> This study also reflects a prospective framework of CA and in addition places its superiority in analysing well-being research.

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<sup>17</sup> The human capital approach views human capital as an input to a productive process. It believes that enhancement of human capital can increase the commodities that a society is able to produce. On the other hand CA concentrates on human well-being and agency (Kuenning and Amin, 2001, p.127). Both of the approaches evaluate education as an important variable for development in different ways. For example education is a good investment under human capital approach as it increases the productivity of an individual. On the other hand CA views education as means of development because it enhances women’s capabilities.



## **PART 2**

### **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN BANGLADESH: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND REALITY**

This part intends to explain the development trends of Bangladesh based on the major concepts of the thesis. The first part will discuss the concepts used in the thesis and their interrelation. The second part is a literature review focusing on recent development issues in the country by utilising the conceptual issues. Finally, the last part elaborates an understanding of how capability expansion plays a role in human development.

### **CONCEPTS OF DEVELOPMENT**

#### **POVERTY**

As discussed in the theoretical section poverty is one of the most persistent and widespread social problem in developing countries and therefore one of the main challenges of development. The global statistics of poverty indicate that almost half of the world's population live below USD 2 a day and are deprived from basic human development opportunities (food, education, shelter, health, access to resources and socio-political participation) (Lee et al, 2011, p.7). From the past 50 years different approaches to poverty reduction have been developed focusing on different areas such as lack of income among households or individuals, or lack of access to social services or inability to fully participate in society economically, politically and culturally. Therefore, catches the attention of various fields of research.

In the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century poverty was perceived on the basis of subsistence needs which used availability of food, shelter and clothing as indicators (Maxwel, 1999). This perception was very much influenced by the study of Seebom Rowntree (1901) who portrayed a family as being in primary poverty if the total earning of the family was insufficient to meet the necessities for maintaining the physical efficiency of its members (Sen, 1981, p. 11). Although this approach implied a link between total earning and basic need fulfilment, it was mainly measured by survival and working efficiency. Therefore, in broad terms it related to nutritional needs and was measured by a specific proportion of total income spending on food. This concept lasted up to 1969 when the main focus of approaches in the study of poverty were based on levels of income which was reflected by gross national product (GNP) per head. This understanding was redefined by the relative deprivation concept of Townsend who argued that poverty was not only the failure to provide minimum nutrition but a failure to keep up with

the standards prevalent in a society (Maxwell, 1999). Rowntree's concept of poverty was also known as subsistence poverty and was very close to the concept of absolute poverty referred to by Drewnowski and Scott (1966) which identified poverty as the deprivation of basic human needs such as food, water, sanitation, housing, and education facilities.

The main criticisms that appeared against the subsistence and absolute poverty concept were that needs for surviving, being physically active and basic human needs can vary given different physical features, climatic conditions, working habits and contexts in different societies. It is not possible to make an assumption on the minimum basic levels of needs universally. Even choice of commodities is important for minimum nutrition requirements to be converted to food requirements (as different types of food gives different nutritional value). Moreover, there are also some expenses involved in non-food items. Subsequently, assuming a specific proportion of food intake (in the case of subsistence poverty) may not always work universally as there are evidences that the targeted amount of food does not always work for all in every place (Townsend, 1979, p.17). These criticisms provided space for the idea of relative poverty considering reasonable or acceptable standards of living in specific societies. Townsend (1979) identified poverty as relative deprivation:

*"Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities" (Townsend, 1979, p. 31).*

Townsend's concept provided the pillar for the next shift in defining poverty which connected income poverty with basic needs. In this definition, poverty was not only pointing to lack of income but also the lack of access to education, health and other services. Afterwards in 1983 Robert Chambers' work on powerlessness and isolation included vulnerability and its associated counterparts as security threats and introduced coping strategies of the poor. Focus on coping strategies broadened the concept of poverty to include livelihood here understood as comprising *"the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base"*. (Scoones in Krantz, 2001, p.1).

Amartya Sen (1981) came out with an intrinsic view of poverty which was very different from the absolute and relative poverty approach. Sen considered poverty

as a capability deprivation where he suggested that poverty cannot be identified based on a person's resource ownership. The focus of this approach considered capabilities instead of income as a tool for poverty reduction. Sen argued that every individual has their own *capabilities* which can be converted to *functioning* (being or doing). This *functioning* can enable a person to come out from the poverty trap. Therefore, the focus was on real value of income where a person's age, various infirmities and social context was considered rather than the virtual face value of income mentioned in the previous approaches.

Inspired by Sen, the idea of well-being in poverty was incorporated in the notion of human development by UNDP (this concept has been described in the previous chapter). Human development can be identified as a counterpart of social exclusion where it (social exclusion) focuses *"on multiple deprivation, low income, poor housing, poor access to education and health, but also on the process by which multiple deprivation occurs. The key arenas for exclusion include democratic and legal systems, markets, welfare state provisions, and family and community: rights, resources and relationships"* (Maxwell, 1999, p.2).

In a nutshell, various poverty approaches have been developed to define poverty theoretically such as the monetary approach, capabilities approach, social exclusion approach, participatory approach and so on. The monetary or economic approach was based on income and consumption and it is still the dominant approach for measuring poverty worldwide by development agencies. The capability approach rejects the income and consumption perspective and measures well-being by an individual's functioning and freedom. The social exclusion approach is based on the structural characteristics of the society, which includes the processes that prohibit individuals, households or groups from full social participation. The participatory approach explains poverty in the view of the poor's own analysis of reality (UN, 2004, p.10). Therefore, the definitions and conceptualisations of poverty in the contemporary world have acknowledged the multidimensionality where at least two major shifts can be identified in the following ways:

- 1) The shift of the poverty concept from a physiological to a social model.
- 2) And the widening of the causal variables by including social, political, cultural and gender equity concepts in the definition and measurement of poverty (Chowdhury and Mukhopadhyaya, 2014, p.269).

## **FOOD SECURITY**

The concept of food security officially emerged in the United Nations World Food Conference in 1974 but the roots of this concept can be traced back to the 1972-74 world food crises and the recognition of the right to food as an element of adequate standard of living in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The UN world food conference described food security as *"the availability at all*

*times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices*" (Datta, 2014, p. 24). This definition has been modified at several food conferences of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and four elements of food security have emerged: availability, access, utilisation and stability (Datta, 2014, p. 25). Simon Maxwell, one of the pioneers in food security research has noted a simple but weighty definition of food security as "*secure access to enough food all the time*" (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.4).

Food security as an important development issue was again raised in the mid-1980s and there is still a continuing debate regarding definitions and applications. Three factors can be identified as leading to the surge in interest towards food security as a development issue. These are: (1) the impact of famine in Africa in 1984-85, (2) a concern with deteriorating basic needs during structural adjustment, and (3) the intellectual progression which stretched from multi-sectoral nutrition planning in the 1970s through entitlement theory in early 1980s' (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.6). The entitlement concept led researchers to think of access to food for an individual or household by their capabilities or resources.

Food security can be identified as an interdisciplinary concept which is highly linked with several economic, political and social issues (Scanlan, 2003, p.88). During the 1970s the focus on food security was on the reliability of aggregate food supply. The focus incorporated the importance of access to food, vulnerability and entitlement in the 1980s. Later, after the 1980s, the issue of nutrition planning, rural development, gender discrimination in food distribution and even environmental sustainability was accommodated (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.6). The involvement of wide issues highlighted the importance for conceptualizing and analysing food security. Therefore, important definitions were developed but most scholars agree with the definition of Maxwell and Smith (1992).

To elaborate, 'sufficiency' can be recognised by adequate calories needed for an active and healthy life. In literature, it has been conceived by authors variously as the following; "*minimum level of food consumption*" by Reutlinger and Knapp (1980), "*enough*" by Maxwell and Smith (1992), "*target level*" by Siamwala and Valdes (1980), "*enough food to supply the energy needed for all family members to live healthy, active and productive lives*" by Sahn (1989) and so on. The power of producing, purchasing, exchanging or receiving food can be included in the '*access of food*' concept whereas '*security*' covers the equilibrium among vulnerability, risk and insurance (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.4). Sufficiency as a pillar of food security is closely related to the availability perspective. Different authors have described this as an important pillar of the issue. By availability they refer to the supply of food. It can be the supply at macro (national food security) or micro level (household food security). They argue that food availability is a state's or

households ability to provide enough food to meet the needs of the people by producing or through import (Pinstrup, 2009; Ecker and Breisinger, 2012).

The definitions of food security imply its broad nature. For example, “*access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life*” (Reutlinger, 1986, p.1) denotes the importance of access in the concept. This therefore, not only points to food availability but also brings another dimension; food access as highlighted in this definition. Access can depend on various issues, such as policies, resource ownership, culture and level of freedom. Put differently, “*food access centers on the ability to produce and/or purchase sufficient nutritious food*” (Slater and Mathers, 2014).

The security perspective has also been defined as utilisation of food. Tweetens (1997) definition highlighted the concern of food utilisation along with the availability and access concept. This statement incorporated nutritional factors in the area. Utilisation therefore refers to nutritional adequacy where positive nutritional outcomes may come from better food utilisation which in turn is related to broader areas such as pure drinking water, hygienic child care practice, sanitation and health care (Freeland and Cherrier, 2012). Finally, food security will only be ensured when it is sustained all times.

Uvin (1994) elaborated that food security is concerned with food shortage, poverty and deprivation, expanding the concept towards food supply, economic issues and other issues related to inequality (gender, rural urban differences, culture). Therefore, food security is embedded with poverty, inequality, globalisation and policy which make it very much important to be considered and analysed as a development issue. In this way, development theories can be discussed from an encompassing dimension to capture the interaction of economic, social and ecosystems explaining food security.

Food security can begin with the *Malthusian perspective* of the capacity of the world to feed its population. Thomas Robert Malthus in *An essay on the principle of population* argued that overpopulation directly affects people’s living and increases suffering as the world’s population grows at a faster rate (grows in geometrical rate) compared to the food production rate (grows in arithmetical rate). He described how unchecked population growth can give rise to food scarcity citing the importance of population control. He argued that uncontrolled population growth results in poverty, hunger and war. In his view, this damage can only be slowed by a preventive check and a positive check, where the first is concerned with decreasing fertility and the second increasing mortality. The *NeoMalthusian* thinkers also support the population control theory as they believe that population control is the starting point of achieving a sustainable food secure society by meeting the needs of the people. They believe that overpopulation decreases agricultural production which gives rise to hunger.

Two major criticisms emerged towards this theory. The first was that food availability does not result from insufficient food production. It is a result of inadequate food distribution (Sen, 1980). The second was that people always develop alternatives by creating new technology and processes to adjust with the changing situation of reduced resources. Sen, in *Development and freedom* noted that Malthus had made a mistake in his calculation and argued that “*not only is there no real decline in food production per head (quite the contrary), but also the largest per capita increases have come in the more densely populated areas of the third world (in particular China, India and the rest of Asia)*” (Sen, 2010, p.205).

Related to this and as previously mentioned modernisation theories suggest that developing countries should follow the pathway of development of the first world countries for industrialisation and well-being (Rostow, 1962). Food security is closely linked with the concept of a modern society because “*modern societies are also the best fed, wealthiest, and most educated, industrialized and particularly stable. Economic growth should undoubtedly contribute to a country’s ability to feed itself, and the ability of a country to achieve modernization will achieve food security*” (Scanlan, 2003, p.97).

Food security is a universal phenomenon, and must consider the international factors affecting hunger (McMichael, 1994). The dependency and world system theories address links between first countries with the underdeveloped countries. Hence, the theories make a bridge between a country’s and the world’s food system. Dependency and world system theories judge food insecurity as a factor of several negative consequences and reflect it as a global problem. Therefore, the policy, strategies and development goals taken by a country to ensure food security is a necessary measure. Important considerations should include the role of agriculture in the economy, aid and food trading between the developed and developing countries (Lappe et al, 1998) and self-sufficiency.

The above discussion points to the fact that efforts towards ensuring food security need to be included in multiple areas such as food production, agriculture and food policies (such as land reform), trade adjustment, technology and supply of food aid. Under this consideration food security depends and has a close link with social roles and status as well as technology and production. Empirical evidence from several studies shows that society, perception and knowledge have an important role in a countries food status (Gladwin et al., 2001; Guyer, 1986; Valdivia and Gilles, 2001 in Carr, 2006). It is from this perspective that social protection as a development objective was introduced in developing countries. The objective of these social protection policies and programmes can be categorised as protective, promotive and transformative or combining all. But overall they have the same intention of helping households manage and cope with vulnerability and risk as well as creating a bridge between short term needs and strategic investment (Slater and Mathers, 2014, p.4).

## SOCIAL SAFETY NET AS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Looking back at the development theories (in chapter 2), Keynes argued for inducing state investment into the economy as a measure for economic growth. This concept gave rise to the Bretton Woods Institutions (WB and IMF) which were supposed to assist developing countries by providing loans the countries. These institutions proposed loan conditionalities known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s. SAPs gave rise to criticism in the development arena. Such criticism, for example, indicated that the SAPs threatened the sovereignty of a country by dictating a nation's economic policy and influencing policy ownership in individual countries. This criticism led the institutions to apply a strategy, supplementing the former SAPs under the principles of Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) in the late 1990s. This new approach required developing countries to prepare strategy papers known as PRSP (Rahman, 2012, p.84). PRSP was based on five principles “(1) **Country-driven**, promoting national ownership of strategies through broad-based participation of civil society (2) **Result-oriented** and focused on outcomes that will benefit the poor (3) **Comprehensive** in recognizing the multidimensional nature of poverty (4) **Partnership-oriented**, involving coordinated participation of development partners (government, domestic stakeholders, and external donors) and (5) **Based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction**”(IMF, 2014, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm>). This way developing countries started to incorporate SSNs in their PRSPs as an instrument for mitigating the social impact of SAPs in developing countries earlier (Vivian, 1994). This raise the question of the country's ownership to the PRSP in general and the viability of SSNs effect on poverty reduction.

Hence, as part of the broader poverty reduction strategies the SSN were introduced as poverty reduction programmes in developing countries as social protection and promotion. The supposed purpose of the SSN programmes was to contribute in development by reallocating income to the poorest and the vulnerable segments of the population, empowering households to make improved investments in their future, assisting households to cope with risks and assisting the government of a country to make selections that support competency and growth (Grosh et al, 2008). The SSN frameworks are inspired by different objectives across developing countries. For example, tackling inequality and improving human development outcomes (Latin America) and food security (Africa and South Asia) (Slater and Mathers, 2014, p.4). Therefore, different issues are involved in the framework of SSN as these programmes need to address poverty reduction on the one hand and other poverty dynamics (such as vulnerability, risk, malnutrition, food insecurity and inequality) on the other hand.

As mentioned previously the World Bank (WB) first introduced the definition of SSN in their World Development Report in 1990 though they were incorporated in

the SAPs from the 1980s. The strategies of SSN have gone through significant analytical and operational changes in developing countries. The first definition of SSN that WB gave in their World Development Report in 1990 was “*some form of income insurance to help people through short term stress and calamities*” (World Bank, 1990, p. 90). This definition pointed at safety nets as short term income support for those who are potentially capable of supporting themselves but have been temporarily unable to do so. Therefore, the targeted population was those who were temporarily exposed to shocks. This definition clearly separated safety nets from long term income or cash transfer programmes and portrayed it as a short term relief operation. The definition has been modified over time. In 2003, after the Asian financial crisis, the World Bank stated that “*safety nets are programmes which protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes in welfare: chronic incapacity to work and earn (chronic poverty) and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides minimal livelihood for survival with few reserves (transient poverty)*” (Khan and Arefin, 2013, p.24). This definition of SSN clearly incorporated redistributive and risk reduction roles in various transfer programmes with the main objective of poverty reduction. It was believed that the redistributive role (cash or asset transfer) had an impact on poverty reduction and the risk reduction role helped an individual or household to protect themselves from unexpected shocks (Paitoonpong et al, 2008, p.470). Therefore, the concept of SSN gradually moved towards poverty reduction and risk management and targeted the poor segments of the population as it was believed that the poor were much more vulnerable than the non-poor. This shows how in recent years the area of SSN has been broadened to incorporate vulnerability.

Vulnerability as a concept has stimulated new analytical refinements for better understanding of the processes which lead towards poverty. “*Vulnerability arises from a complex web of economic, political and social conditions, a process of cumulative conditions which vary over time and space depending largely on the changing processes through which individuals, households and communities fulfill their immediate subsistence needs and invest in medium and long reproduction of their social system*” (Ugo, 2005, p.4). In simple terms vulnerability can be described as living on the edge and that a small push can help to increase the ability of the vulnerable to survive and thrive on the one hand while a sudden risk would take this ability to the other extreme. The complexity of vulnerability can be described by the following figure.



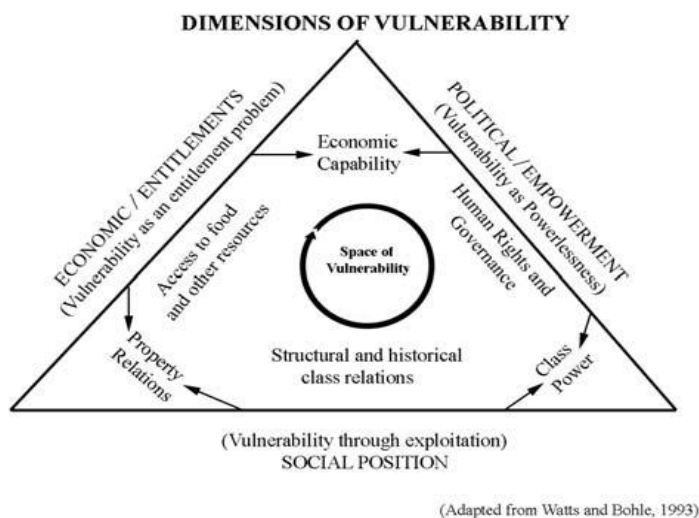


Figure 2.5 Complexity in vulnerability concept

(Source: Watts and Bhole, 1993, p.53 in Ugo, 2005, p.4)

Vulnerability should be defined or identified by specific threats to different kinds of people living in different areas in different times. For example, vulnerability of poverty, vulnerability of food insecurity, vulnerability of natural disasters and so on, varies depending on the population type or the country, society or depending on the time period. Vulnerability may be lessened through risk management strategies which target (1) reducing the exposure to risks, (2) increasing the ability of risk management and, (3) by aiming at both (Ugo, 2005, p.5). Managing risk can be classified broadly in three segments; preventing, mitigating and coping. These strategies should be implemented before the shock occurs in order to prevent the possibility of falling during the shock.

Mitigation strategies include strategies to reduce the impact of the shock after its occurrence.<sup>18</sup> This can take the form of insurance schemes. On the other hand, coping mechanisms are the strategies undertaken after being affected by the shock. These mechanisms help to cope and recover from the shock and aim at reducing the vulnerability of being affected by further risk. According to Devereux (2003, p.9)

<sup>18</sup> Risk and shocks are differentiated according to their distinct phenomena. There are risks which may arise but not affect people. When it hits and affects the life it becomes a shock. For example, the weather forecast may predict a cyclonic occurrence in a specific area. This is a risk factor for the people living in that specific region. It becomes a shock when it hits the area and affects the lifestyle of the vulnerable living there.

*“In the aftermath of a food crisis, it is all too easy to focus on ‘coping’ interventions, designed to assist affected households and communities first, to survive and second, to rebuild their livelihoods. These are important ameliorative measures, but they do nothing to reduce vulnerability to future shocks that will require more ex post coping interventions..... This requires a more holistic view of social protection than is usually adopted, and implies making strong linkages with ‘developmental’ policies such as those aimed at market deepening, without neglecting the immediate needs of the vulnerable”.* This is a clear guideline for social protection programmes aiming sustainable poverty reduction.

In recent years the safety nets are designed to address vulnerability and are considered to be well-designed instruments for growth. The most common forms of SSN are: (1) Cash transfers to the vulnerable (2) Conditional cash transfers (3) Public works programmes accommodating unskilled workers during slack seasons (4) Asset Transfers transferring food or in-kind benefits (5) Subsidies controlling prices and (6) Fee waivers reducing costs when utilizing public benefits.

## **GENDER INEQUALITY**

Gender was incorporated in poverty and inequality discourse beginning in the 1970's with a particular focus on women. From the late 1970s women in development (WID) and women empowerment became vital components of poverty reduction and development policies. Later, in the 1980's the gender and development (GAD) approach emerged. This approach focused on the range of benefits that men and women derive from programmes; social, economic and cultural forces. This approach highlighted the importance of equal participation by women, as compared to men, in all spheres of involvement. There was also a move of analysing poverty from a gender perspective. This was the time when the term “*feminization of poverty*” was initiated explaining “*a series of phenomena within poverty that specifically affected women and showed that poor women outnumbered poor men, that women suffered more severe poverty than men and that female poverty displayed a more marked tendency to increase, largely because of the rise in the number of female -headed households*” (UN, 2004, p.12). In addition to highlighting the increased number of poor women, as opposed to men, in society, this term sought to explain that frequently poor families were in most cases headed by women. Hence, women empowerment as a tool for poverty reduction and development was introduced in the 1980s and gradually leaned towards the gender

equity concept.<sup>19</sup> It was understood that poverty affects men and women in different ways and subsequently increases the vulnerability of women.

Observing the division of labour in a gender perspective and assigning women's work in the domestic sphere Bravo (1998, p.63) argued that this work distribution gives rise to "*inequality of opportunities for women, as a gender, to gain access to material and social resources (ownership of productive capital, paid labour, education and training), and to participate in decision-making in the main political, economic and social policies*". Along with work distribution, women's limited access to resources and education was also identified as increasing the vulnerability of women in the face of poverty. After the 90s gender mainstreaming became part of the development agenda emphasizing that social change cannot occur as long as gender inequality exists.<sup>20</sup>

Before the arrival of modernity, inequalities were treated as natural phenomena. This began to be questioned in the nineteenth century. These questions incorporated the need of achieving equal rights in law and political participation (Alastair et al, 2007, p.11). This focus moved towards social equality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Miller (1992, p. 200 in Alastair et al, 2007, p.11) stated that "*The idea that people should be treated as equals in all institutional spheres that affect their life chances: in their education, in their work, in their consumption opportunities, in their access to social services, in their domestic relation and so forth*". Moser's *Anti-poverty approach to women* observed that women's poverty is a consequence of underdevelopment rather than subordination (Moser, 1993, p.66-69). It is against this background the developing agencies started to adopt instrumental approaches where agencies such as the World Bank justified how attention towards women empowerment can facilitate development objectives. The World Bank argued that women's empowerment can contribute to poverty reduction, economic performance and other development objectives (World Bank, 1989, p.iii).

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<sup>19</sup> The term "Gender refers to the social differences and relations between men and women which are learned, very widely among societies and cultures, and change over time.....gender is used to analyse the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of women and men in all areas and in any given social context" (Sarker, 2006, p. 1).

<sup>20</sup> "Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men for any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality"(Sarker, 2006, p. 1-2).

In 2000, agency and the role of women were identified as a tool for social change by Sen. He argued that the agency role of women can remove inequalities and ensure well-being. He stated that women's well-being is strongly influenced by activities such as ability to earn independently, employing outside home, having ownership rights, being educated and having power of participating in decision-making inside and outside the family. Moreover *“even the survival disadvantage of women compared with men in developing countries seems to go down sharply- and may even eliminated- as progress is made in these agency aspects”* (Sen, 2010, p.191).

## **POVERTY, FOOD SECURITY, SSN AND GENDER: INTERLINKING THE ISSUES**

In recent years SSN programmes have been designed as *“non-contributory transfer programmes targeted to the poor and those vulnerable to shocks”* (FAO, 2011, p. 4). According to the modern definition (Khan and Arefin, 2013, p.24) these programmes protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes: chronic incapacity to work and earn (chronic poverty) and a decline in this capacity (transient poverty). Chronic incapacity to work or earn can be a result of physical or mental disability, unemployment or long-term illness but is worsens in shock situations. SSNs can be instruments of dealing adequately with these types of situations by directly addressing poverty. They may potentially present advantages to the vulnerable through the redistribution of assets or income earning. The programmes can also contribute towards capital formation and cause an immediate and sometimes long term impact on poverty, risk management and future investment (World Bank, 2008, FAO, 2011).

Devereux (2002, p. 662) notes that SSN can help poverty reduction in two ways; creating assets and developing investment culture and practice among the programme participants. The food transferring SSNs can contribute towards increasing labour productivity. The study of Devereux (Arcand, 2001, p.5 in Devereux, 2002a, p.3) indicates that *“there is a statistically significant, and quantitatively important impact of nutrition on growth [which] operates in part directly, probably through its impact on labour productivity, as well as indirectly, through improvements in life expectancy”*. Therefore, feeding the poor through SSNs is not only a good policy but also a sound economic investment. Sustainable poverty reduction can be achieved through targeted SSNs which take the form of cash or food transfer (Devereux, 2002, p.663). An increased labour productivity encourages a worker to work more. Employment creating SSNs (such as public work programmes or food for work) create opportunities to work thereby raising earnings.

Public work or food for work programmes can stabilise income and cause multiplier effects. For instance, during poor harvests these programmes stabilise the income

and food consumption by providing food or cash. On the other hand, as a multiplier effect the purchasing power created by these programmes attracts traders and increases economic activity (Devereux, 2002, p.664). Asset transferring SSNs such as CFPR in Bangladesh and Employment guarantee scheme in Maharashtra enhance the entrepreneurial skills of programme participants by inculcating investment culture in them.

Therefore, cash, food or asset transfer programmes, can create permanent assets or develop an investment culture among participants and have sustainable impact on poverty reduction. Furthermore, these types of programmes can improve nutritional standards and improve working abilities (Khan and Arefin, 2013, p.27). Moreover, SSN's contribute toward the overall development policy and promote growth by reducing poverty, handling risk management, providing equal opportunity to the vulnerable and giving social protection (Alderman and Hoddinott, 2007, Alderman and Yemtsov, 2013, Khuda 2011). This promotes livelihood and reduces poverty by creating assets during crisis periods. Additionally, it may develop some savings (Gertler et al 2012, Mahmuda et al, 2014).

The four pillars of food security (availability, access, utilisation and all time) can also be addressed by SSN. Food availability is the supply of enough food to an individual, household or state which can directly be addressed by SSN. Asset transfer SSNs in practice transfers land/seed/ fertiliser or livestock's. These can help in increasing the agricultural production or productivity. Public works programmes are basically infrastructure building programmes which provide food or cash for the workers. These programmes can work toward making food available in two ways. Firstly, the food transfers ensure food to the workers. On the other hand by creating employment opportunities and recruiting the poor it generates income in the household. Secondly, building roads or bridges improve rural urban communication which makes transportation easy and convenient and improves the access to food, seed and fertilisers. An open and improved access to these infrastructures creates competition among the distributors, lowers prices and impacts positively on food availability.

Food access targets the ability of producing or purchasing sufficient nutritious foods. This area can be addressed by SSN adequately. SSNs can work towards making food accessible by (1) direct transfer of food (2) increasing household income by creating employment opportunities and (3) improving farming and production (Slater and Mathers, 2014, p.5). For instance, food for work programmes make food available and accessible by directly supplying food to the workers. On the other hand, cash for work increases the earnings and makes the purchasing of food convenient. Asset transfer programmes increase the earning as well as productivity of an individual or household. School feeding programmes make a direct access to food. There are examples of SSNs increasing food access in Latin America and Ethiopia, such as cash transfer programme and public works,

supplementary feeding, fortified school meals and take home rations in (Freeland and Cherrier, 2012, in Slater and Mathers, 2014, p.6).

Food utilisation targets nutritional adequacy of food eaten. This component of food security is a broad issue as it does not only depend on the nutritive value of a specific food but also can be improvised by refining supplementary areas such as, making pure drinking water available, developing hygienic awareness, advising child health care practices, improving sanitation and so on. Awareness and advice on these issues can make a positive impact on health. It is clear that illness hampers utilisation by reducing absorption of nutrients. SSNs integrated with training and an awareness building components can improve knowledge and practice in the mentioned areas which can in turn make a positive impact on utilisation of nutrients in food.

Finally, the last pillar sustainability or all time is concerned with crisis prevention and risk management. Almost all SSNs are protective mechanisms for risk management during sudden shocks. Furthermore, SSNs such as asset or cash transfer (or both) can be helpful for developing some savings which can bolster the ability of the programme participants to sustain sudden shocks or crises. The CFPR asset transfer programme of Bangladesh is an example of this cash saving and capacity building SSN (Mahmuda et al, 2014). Zimbabwe or Ethiopia's PSNPs are examples of long term responses to predictable shocks by developing participant's ability to cope with future risks (Slater et al, 2014, p.6).

Gender inequality and gender based discrimination increases the vulnerability of women with respect to poverty and access to food. Women play a vital role in meeting the food and nutritional needs of the family members by taking a crucial part in the process of food production, access to food and securing the nutritional needs which signifies their pivotal role in providing the family's food security (Quisumbing et al, 1995). Studies on comparison between effect of women and men's income indicate that women's earnings make greater contribution towards household food security than men in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Quisumbing et al, 2011). Relatedly safety nets have a two way operational mechanism which can contribute to empowering women and providing a path for their agency role. Firstly, SSNs can provide employment opportunity for a woman and generate income. Contributing economically in the family empowers the women and enhances her social standing in the family as well as in the society (Sen, 2010, p.191). Asset providing SSNs create entrepreneurship opportunities among women coupled with access to resources which, in turn has a long term effect on their well-being. Secondly, additional components present in specific SSNs creates awareness among women about their rights, provides basic training on health care and child rearing and enlightens them by providing basic knowledge on law, health and child development.

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN REALITY: AN OVERVIEW OF BANGLADESH

### POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY TRENDS

Bangladesh has shown a remarkable development in its efforts to reduce poverty. This is despite the fact that the country has also gone through several crises such as the massive cyclone and war in 1971 and the famine in 1974. These occurrences skewed the poverty rate up to 80% as mentioned earlier. It however went down significantly to the level of 57% in the mid 1990's. This decline was mainly observed in urban areas with 35% poverty rate while the rate in the rural areas was around 57 % (World Bank, 1998, Rahman et al., 1998, Kabeer, 2002). Though there was an increase in real per capita income of the people in 2000, the national poverty rate was 31.5% in 2013. This indicates that Bangladesh still remains a low income country with significant poverty and deprivation (World Bank, 2013, IFAD, 2013).

Table 2.3 Poverty headcount rates

Year	Upper Poverty line			Lower Poverty line		
	National	Rural	Urban	National	Rural	Urban
2010	31.5	35.2	21.3	17.6	21.1	7.7
2005	40.0	43.8	28.4	25.1	28.6	14.6
2000	48.9	52.3	35.2	34.3	37.9	20.0
1995-96	50.1	54.5	27.8	35.2	39.5	13.7
1991-92	56.7	58.8	42.8	41.1	43.8	24.0

Source: (HIES Data in Ferdousi and Dehai, 2014, p.3)

The poverty rate of the country signifies a gradual improvement in peoples' income. Considering the national poverty rate, almost one third of the total population is still below the upper poverty line (as shown in Table 2.3). Despite a gradual progress in poverty rate, the population living below the line increased from 1991 to 2005. The number increased from 51.6 million in 1991-92 to 56 million in 2005 (Ferdousi and Dehai, 2014, p.3). However the 2010 data indicate progress estimating the poor population at 48 million (based on population in 2010 and poverty rate 31.5 percent).

Developing agencies, such as the World Bank (2008b) have recorded the country's economic changes in this period as a success story. There are obviously some valuable grounds for this judgment. The formal economy of the country is mainly

dominated by three sectors agricultural, manufacturing or industrial and service sector. The sector-wise share (%) in GDP of the country is shown in figure 2.6.

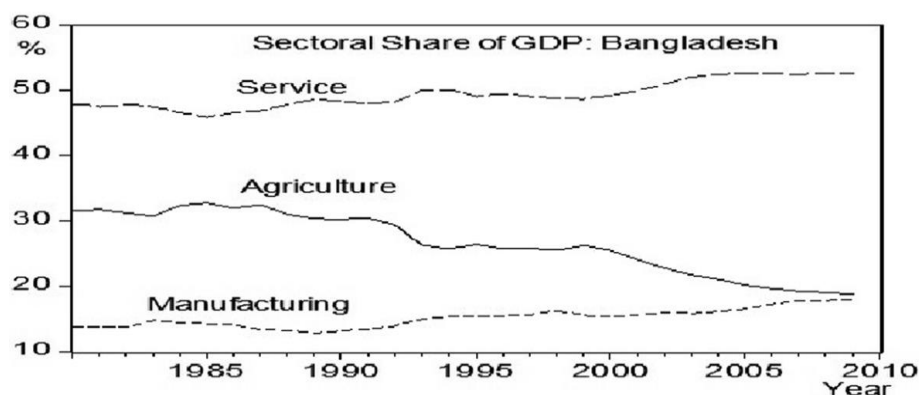


Figure 2.6 Sector wise share (%) of GDP in Bangladesh: 1980-2010

(Ali and Islam, 2014, p.235)

Moreover, foreign aid and remittances also play a vital role in the economy. The agricultural sector was the dominant sector in the formal economy in 1970s. The contribution of agriculture to GDP was 50 per cent in 1970 declining to around 18 per cent in the 21 century (Lewis, 2011, p. 137). In more detail, “in fiscal year (FY) 2009-10, the share of agriculture in GDP was 20.29 percent, whereas in FY2010-11, FY2011-12 and FY2012-13 the share was 20.01 percent, 19.42 percent and 18.70 percent respectively” (Unnayan Onneshan, 2014, p.4). In the agricultural sector, rice is the dominant crop and is also the staple food of the people.

Bangladesh became self-sufficient in its staple food (rice) production from 2013. The country tripled the production from 1971 to 2013 producing 33 million tonnes up (in 2013) from 11 million tonnes (in 1971) (The Daily Star, 20 March 2013). The major shift in the increase of rice production started during the 1990s with the modernisation of irrigation technology. Successive governments prioritised the food security issue and incorporated it in overall policies. With an aim to increase production in the agricultural sector, modernisation of agricultural technologies, use of high yield varieties (HYV) of rice and artificial high yielding fertilisers were adopted.

As mentioned earlier after 1982, the country liberalised existing trade policies by shifting its strategy from import substitution to outward orientation. The ready-made garment industries started acting as the main economic sector. The export trends of the country moved from raw materials to finished goods and this had far



reaching consequences for social change because it mainly employed women. According to Kabeer (2002 a, p.69) *“it took market forces, and the advent of an export oriented garment manufacturing industry, to achieve what a decade of government and non-government efforts had failed to do: to create a female labour force of sufficient visibility, and on such a scale, that it could no longer be overlooked by official data gathering exercises”*. The policy shift resulted in success with the annual GDP growth rising to 6 per cent. From 2002 the economy went through a steady annual growth rate of between 4 to 6 per cent. Currently the country’s exports ready-made garments including jute products, ships, leather, shrimp and seafood. Of the labour force in the country 45 per cent are employed in the agricultural sector, 30 per cent in the industrial sector and 25 per cent in the service sector (Meraj, 2013, p.41). Meraj (2013), continues to note that the growth of Bangladesh was resilient to the global financial crisis and recession during the period 2008-09 due to garment exports (totalling \$12.3 billion in the 2009 fiscal year) and remittances from overseas Bangladeshis (totalling \$11 billion in FY10). Furthermore, some of the big gains of the country that may have attracted foreign investors include success in birth control, enrolment of girls in primary education and low infant mortality rate, among others. From 1990 to 2010 the life expectancy rose from 59 to 69 years. The primary education enrolment rate of girls has reached 90 per cent and infant mortality rate has been lowered to 37 deaths per thousand in 2010 as opposed to 97 deaths per thousand in 1990 (Ibid).

These impressive figures are indicative of the tremendous achievement of Bangladesh which was categorised as a *“basket case”* in 1972 by Henry Kissinger’s state department. This term was used to refer to countries dependency on aid at the time. After independence in 1972, the country received a total of USD 45 billion as foreign aid including grants and loans. 45 per cent of the money was in the form of grant aid and 55 per cent was in the form of loans (Lewis, 2011, p. 144). Due to the increase in agricultural production, export and remittance, in 2013 aid narrowed down to USD 3.37 billion with an increase in the loan proportion (77.15 per cent) where grants represented only 22.9 percent (Budget in brief, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh, 2014, p.11). Additionally, Hossain (2005, p.13) describes the reasons for the decrease in foreign aid by denoting that donors *“may have felt less need to intervene because, for the first time under democratic rule, economic policy remained broadly in line with donor preferences, and growth and poverty reduction were steady, if unspectacular. Donors may also have had less scope to intervene because the problems of development in Bangladesh were increasingly being diagnosed as political (or governance) problems, rather than the familiar problems of resource constraints and technical deficiencies”*.

The gradual poverty decline rate is also an indicator of development according to the developing agencies. Measuring poverty in Bangladesh since 1995-96 is based on the cost of basic needs (CBN) method. Two poverty lines are estimated by this

method; lower poverty line and upper poverty line. This method of measurement considers the poverty lines based on basic need costs categorised in food and non-food items. The food poverty line considers the cost of a fixed bundle of food items consisting 2122 kcal per day per person and the non-food poverty line estimates the cost of non-food items of a specific bundle. This CBN measurement estimates people as poor if their per capita expenditure is below a given poverty line. It is true that, the measurement considers the items of basic needs categorizing it as food and non-food items but in operation it is considering the cost of these items. This consideration is based on a specific amount of money and is similar to the World Bank method.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, there may be controversies on the appropriateness of items and pricing of commodities placed in the non-food list. On the other hand, whether the people are buying the selected foods or non-food items (if they have this amount of money) is another question. Furthermore, considering this poverty measure, the estimate suggests a minimum spending of Bangladeshi Taka 50 (USD 0.71) for obtaining 2122 kilocalorie per day but adding the non-food commodities (such as health care, education, clothing, housing and transportation) it becomes very difficult to survive with the income of USD 1.25 (Titumir and Rahman, 2011, p.17).

This amount (USD 1.25 per day) is also the baseline for estimating poverty by the World Bank. In addition, poverty measurement by the CBN method based on a consumption approach has been criticised as it *“indicates change in the monetary poverty rate for the whole Bangladesh or region wise, but is unable to capture the changes in social, political and cultural dimensions of poverty for a specific year”* (Chowdhury and Mukhopadhaya, 2014, p.276). For example, if a person earns or spends less than USD 1.25 per day he or she is considered as poor in the view of the World Bank as well as the Bangladeshi measure. However after one year his/her income or expenditure may rise to USD 1.3, and then he will be considered as non-poor, which may not be the reality. The person may face more difficulty in maintaining his daily life compared to the previous year. This is because the expenditure may rise due to the price increase of commodities. The poverty measurements only consider the income but not adjust with inflation (Titumir and Rahman, 2011, p.7). Therefore, a rise in expenditure doesn't always imply an improvement in lifestyle. The household income and expenditure data of the government in Bangladesh shows the monthly growth rate of household income and expenditure during 2005 to 2010 at 11.87 percent, 11.67 percent and 11.50 percent at national, rural and urban level. On the other hand, the expenditure data shows a growth rate of monthly household expenditure at 16.52 percent, 16.14 percent and 16.40 percent. Among these expenditure statistics, the food expenditure growth rate was 17.59 percent, 16.67 percent and 19.20 percent at national, rural and urban areas respectively (HIES data, 2010 in Ferdousi and Dehai, 2014, p.5).

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<sup>21</sup> World Banks defines people living bellow USD 1.25 as poor.

This high rate of expenditure suggests the difficulties faced by people in managing their livelihoods.

‘Poverty gap’ is the measure estimating depth of poverty while ‘squared poverty gap’ represents severity of poverty in a specific population. The poverty gap was 5.56 percent during the year 2005 to 2010 whereas it was 5.94 per cent during 2000 to 2005. In the case of the square poverty gap the rate was 7.39 per cent during 2000 to 2005 whereas it was 6.26 per cent during 2005-2010 (Titumir and Rahman, 2011, p.5). The data indicate a decreased rate in the percentage of both poverty depth and severity. There is an improvement in poverty reduction but the downwards rate has become slow compared to the year 2000-2005. The following table 2.4 shows the poverty gap and square poverty gap scenario of the country. Titumir and Rahman (2011, p.5) suggest inequality as the reason explaining this slow rate.

Table 2.4 Poverty gap and square poverty gap in Bangladesh

Year	Poverty Gap	Change	Square poverty gap	Change
<b>National</b>				
<b>1995-96</b>	8.6		2.4	
<b>2000</b>	12.8	4.2	4.6	2.2
<b>2005</b>	9.0	3.8	2.9	2.3
<b>2010</b>	6.5	2.5	2.0	0.9
<b>Rural</b>				
<b>1995-96</b>	9.2		2.2	
<b>2000</b>	13.7	4.5	4.9	2.7
<b>2005</b>	9.8	3.9	3.1	0.2
<b>2010</b>	7.4	2.2	2.2	0.9
<b>Urban</b>				
<b>1995-96</b>	7.7		2.7	
<b>2000</b>	9.1	1.4	3.3	0.6
<b>2005</b>	6.5	2.6	2.1	1.2
<b>2010</b>	4.3	2.2	1.3	0.8

Source: HIES DATA in Ferdousi and Dehai, 2014, p.4

Bangladesh is one of the countries in the world with the highest income inequality. Although there is a stable growth rate in the economy, inequality increased from 1990s for two reasons “(a) even within a generally employment intensive pattern of growth, the more dynamic parts of the economy happened to be those with

*relatively unequal income and (b) growth was not strong enough to increase wages in the vast agricultural and informal labour markets”* (Khandoker and Mahmud, 2012, p.35-36). The income inequality data can be represented by Gini coefficient. The scale of this measure varies between 0 to 1 where 1 represents the highest inequality and 0 represents the lowest. The following table 2.5 represents the income inequality status of the country.

Table 2.5 Income inequality in Bangladesh

Year	Rural	Urban	National
2000	0.393	0.497	0.451
2005	0.428	0.497	0.467
2010	0.430	0.452	0.458
Growth rate	0.94	- 0.91	0.16

Source: (Titumir and Rahman, 2011, p.14).

Conventionally scholars have argued that economic growth can reduce poverty. There is a worldwide perception that growth is not fairly distributed and that this could be the reason of the widening gap between the poor and rich. A rise in inequality can lessen the impact of economic growth in poverty reduction. In the case of Bangladesh a disparity exists in resource distribution which creates a gap between the rich and poor hampering the expected level of poverty reduction (Ferdousi and Dehai, 2014, p. 6; Titumir and Rahman, 2011, p.17). The Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2009 ranked the country in position 106 among 160 countries in their ‘quality of life index’. This ranking was based on the country’s income poverty, institutional and health conditions of the population. The income level per head of the population is one of the lowest in the world (Lewis, 2011, p.158). According to the 2013 Human development index, Bangladesh was ranked 146 out of 186 countries and 68<sup>th</sup> of 79 countries according to the Global Hunger index of 2012 which also indicated that 37 million people in the world are food insecure (FAO, 2014, available at <https://www.wfp.org/countries/Bangladesh/Overview>)

In addition to poverty, the undernourishment rate is extremely high in the country. Khandoker and Mahmud (2012, p.34 and 37) describe the situation as *“the most disturbing consequence of widespread poverty is that 40 per cent of Bangladesh’s 150 million people cannot afford an adequate diet. Chronically food insecure and highly vulnerable, many of these people remain without assets (other than their own labour power) to cushion lean season hunger or the crushing blows of illness, floods and other natural calamities.....child malnutrition rates in Bangladesh remain among the highest in the world, with an estimated 46 per cent of children under five suffering from malnourishment compared with 27 per cent in Sub*

*Saharan Africa*". According to Bangladesh demographic and health survey (2011), the undernourishment rate of children below 5 years is estimated at 41 per cent. Furthermore, one among every four women of reproductive age is chronically malnourished (FAO, 2014). Based on these figures it is not surprising that research suggests a close relationship between malnourishment and gender gap (Sraboni et al, 2014, p.11).

### **GENDER INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY**

In developing countries like Bangladesh, women face different types of constraints due to embedded norms, social and religious practices as well as legal issues. Social practices, customary rules and traditions all act as barriers to women's access to land, resources and even food. Poverty and food security thus becomes affected by gender discrimination mainly through two channels (1) limiting access to labour market and education and (2) Deprivation of freedom and decision-making. A gender based division of labour prohibits women's entry into the labour market curtailing their economic capacity. This curtailed economic capacity weakens women's decision-making power and autonomy. On the other hand, social customs and culture act as a challenge to accessing educational institutions which in turn cumulatively weakens their capacities in decision-making.<sup>22</sup>

The government of Bangladesh has initiated activities to incorporate women into the economic mainstream activities to ensure equal opportunities. These activities are initiated and implemented by the Ministry of women and children affairs and include several activities as described in table 2.6.

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<sup>22</sup> As mentioned previously the customs of gender discrimination in Bangladesh is a vital reason of girl's enrolment in educational institution. "The perceived inferiority of women and girls is deeply embedded in Bangladeshi society. Discrimination starts from birth—female infanticide is widely practiced—and persists throughout life. Many families still keep their girls from school simply because they don't believe a girl needs or should have an education. Many girls are married at very young ages, eliminating any chance they had to receive an education beyond the primary level. Especially in rural areas, girls are also frequently kept in the home to work, further exacerbating the problems of access they already face. There are currently 1.5 million primary school age girls un-enrolled in primary education" (Ardt et al, 2005, p.7).

Table 2.6 Activities of government to incorporate women in economic mainstream

Medium term strategic objectives	Activities
Creation of equal opportunity for women in social and economic activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing technical, vocational and income generating training, equipment for production and micro-credit to facilitate self-employment among women.</li> <li>2. Forming and registering voluntary social organisations, and providing assistance.</li> <li>3. Providing training and development of residential facilities so as to empower women entrepreneurs and enhance their efficiency and skill.</li> <li>4. Creating opportunities for women and children to facilitate access to modern information technology</li> </ol>
Social protection and justice for vulnerable women and children	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing allowances to lactating mothers to remove poverty</li> <li>2. Providing food assistance to vulnerable women under VGD Programme and provide cash assistance and production inputs instead of food under FLS Program</li> <li>3. To give maternity allowances for the ultra-poor and pregnant women</li> <li>4. Providing medical services and financial assistance to abused/distressed women and children</li> <li>5. Providing hostel facilities for working women and day care facilities for their children●</li> <li>6. Providing medical treatment, legal assistance, counselling, safe shelter and food assistance to abused women and children</li> </ol>

	7.To make available residential accommodation for women, girls and children during the trial period in Courts.
Social and political empowerment	<p>1. Arrange training for elected female representatives and organise awareness building programs to increase Women's participation in the electoral process.</p> <p>2. To increase awareness through meetings in the court yards to prevent women trafficking.</p>

(Source Ministry of women and children affairs, available at [http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/14\\_15/gender\\_budget/en/04\\_30\\_MoWCA\\_English.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/14_15/gender_budget/en/04_30_MoWCA_English.pdf))

Even then, high gender discrimination remains one of the major obstacles towards development in the country. The dominant patriarchal system in society has made women to become socially and economically dependent on men.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, cultural norms are also responsible for impeding women's emancipation and empowerment processes (Mohammad and Hossain, 2005, p.441). The traditional belief that a man has a right to control a woman's activities makes women subordinate to men in society consequently affecting every aspect of their lives including decision-making, working, freedom and so on (Rahman et al, 2013, p.1). The government of Bangladesh is working on reducing this gender inequality in sectors such as employment, education and health where major inequalities exist through the utilizations of SSNs as instruments for women empowerment. However, due to several reasons, the improvement has not been satisfactory. Table 2.7 below depicts the inequality in education and health sectors in Bangladesh.

<sup>23</sup> "Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father in a male-dominated family. Patriarchy is a system in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation and oppression by men" (Bhasin, 1993, p. 3).

Table 2.7 Inequality in different sectors in Bangladesh

Year	Literacy rate (%)		Year	Child mortality rate (%) per thousand live birth	
	Male	Female		Boy	Girl
<b>2000</b>	49.5	40.1	<b>1993-94</b>	46.7	62.3
<b>2005</b>	55.8	48.1	<b>1996-97</b>	36.9	47.0
<b>2010</b>	61.12	54.8	<b>1999-2000</b>	28.4	37.7
			<b>2004</b>	24.0	29.0
			<b>2007</b>	16.0	20.0
			<b>2010</b>	10.0	14.0

(Developed based on Unnayan Onneshan, 2011a, 2011b)

The main reasons of the prevailing gender gap can be identified thus: (1) the structure of society and institutions where the traditional structure of society and institutions only recognises women for their reproductive role hence becoming a barrier for them to participate in public life. (2) Ensuring women's security outside home is a hurdle due to the lack in implementation of existing security laws. The lack of policy and implementation of law makes parents to fear sending their daughters to the education institutions because they are scared about their security. This fear of violence forces families to keep girls or women at home and hampers on women's participation in education institutions, employment as well as their access to health facilities. (3) A preoccupied mind-set of men as outdoor workers and as responsible for the upkeep of the family and of the aged (parents) can be identified as another cause for treating men and women unequally. This is also another reason for son preference in families. (4) Furthermore, the culture of early marriage is another barrier to women's participation in educational institutions and the employment sector. The early marriage also creates vulnerability in their health status (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011, p.6-7).



The three main vital sectors where discrimination persists are the labour market, education, and health. Participation in the labour market is hampered by the cultural perception of men being the only bread winners and this automatically imposes a restriction in the mobility of women. Economic opportunities outside the home are more suitable for men compared to the women of Bangladesh. The society considers women as physically weak and unskilled for labour market jobs. Moreover, the socio cultural and religious conservations make it more difficult for women to work outside their house. Traditionally, the role of a girl in the Bangladeshi society is linked with household and reproductive activities are mostly non-monetised (Mohammad and Hossain, 2005, p.441). Basically, these activities are cooking and serving meals for the family members, raising children, taking care of the aged members, washing and drying cloths and other household activities. There are some agricultural activities which women perform such as raising livestock and poultry or vegetable growing, helping the male farmer of the family by threshing, boiling, husking of crops and preserving food (Mohammad and Hossain, 2005, p.443). Gender biasness are high in the agricultural labour market. Male labour is preferred in the agricultural sector, and women are employed mainly when the male labour supply is insufficient. Women's capacity to generate earning in the agricultural sector is highly constrained by their narrow use, ownership and control of productive physical and human capital (Sraboni et al, 2014, p.12). The following table 2.8 shows employment status of male and female of the country in different periods.

Table 2.8 Employment status of male and female in Bangladesh

Year	Male					
	National	Growth rate (%)	Rural	Growth rate (%)	Urban	Growth rate (%)
1993-94	57.5		57.7		56.6	
1999-2000	44.2	-3.86	41.5	-4.68	55.5	-0.32
2004	67.5	13.18	67.2	15.48	68.4	5.81
2007	68.3	.04	68.0	0.40	69.2	0.39
Year	Female					
1993-94	10.6		9.8		16.5	
1999-2000	9.7	-1.42	8.5	-2.2	14.5	-2.02
2004	15.2	14.18	13.8	15.59	19.9	9.31
2007	22.9	16.89	22.7	21.49	23.6	6.20

(Source: Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011, p.14)

Table 2.8 shows an increase in women's employment status after 2000 which is an effect of the growth in export oriented industries mainly the ready-made garment industries which employed females as their main labour force as a result of their sewing skills. Though there was a gradual increase of women in the formal sector labour force, the existing data still indicates a huge discrepancy in women employment compared to men.

There is also a visible gender gap in the education sector. In the year 2000 the literacy rate of boy children was 49.5 per cent whereas the girl's education rate was 40.1 percent. In 2010 this percentage rose to 61.12 per cent for boys and 54.8 per cent for girls (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011, p.10). It seems that the average gender gap in education is being reduced and it could be attributed to the policy adopted by the government to increase the enrolment rate of girls in schools. Education is free up to grade twelve for girls and there are stipends and free meals for girls coming from poor households which attracted the parents to send their girls to schools. There is a plan of the government to extend girls free education up to grade sixteen (Bachelors level) (Hasina, S, 2015, p.2).

Women are also vulnerable in the health sector. Due to poverty, illiteracy and limited access to health services, the nutritional status of women is very low in Bangladesh. This condition deteriorates, when it is accompanied by early marriage, absence of pre-marital counselling and teen age pregnancy. Because of the patriarchal societal structure, women are deprived of adequate diet as the normal tradition is for women to eat after all the male members finish their meal. Therefore, women get the leftover and most of the time it is not adequate for their nutritional needs. These traditions have been passed over generations and the result is a malnourished mother giving birth to a malnourished child (Ferdaush and Rahman, 2011, p.12).

Current research indicates that women's ownership to resource has a close relation with a child's outcome specifically nutrition and education (Skoufies, 2005, Quisumbing, 2003 and Hallman, 2003). Religious cultures also affect resource ownership among women in the country. Almost 85 per cent of the population is Muslim while 15 per cent is Hindu. According to religious traditions the girl child inherits 50 per cent of the boy child being a Muslim whereas the girl child does not inherit any asset in Hindu religious law and trend. Though there is a share in Muslim law, in practice the brothers own the total inheritance and deprive the girl from their parent's assets. This extends inequality to asset inheritance as well.

All these factors challenge economic access, freedom and decision-making power of women in the country which make them vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity.

## **POVERTY REDUCTION SAFETY NETS IN BANGLADESH:**

This section gives a brief introduction of the SSNs in Bangladesh (it is discussed in details in Chapter 4) in this thesis.

Bangladesh has a huge number of SSNs which address various forms of risk and vulnerability and attempt to reduce poverty through direct transfer of resources to the poor. Bangladesh started the social protection of safety nets in the mid 70's. From that period the safety nets have undergone functional changes in their administrative structure and implementation mechanisms. During the last two decades, the government has been pursuing a number of safety nets. The safety nets of the country consist of both food and cash based programmes. They have been categorised as – Social Protection and Social Empowerment Programmes (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Social Protection Programmes include allowances for old aged people, widows, distressed and destitute women, financially insolvent disabled, maternity allowance for poor lactating mothers, insolvent freedom fighters, injured freedom fighters, non-Bengali rehabilitation etc. As mentioned earlier there are seven food Security targeted social protection programmes which include Food for Work (FFW), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Open Market Sale (OMS), Test Relief (TR) Food, Gratuitous Relief (GR) and Food and Food Assistance in Chittagong Hill Tracts Area (Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh website, 2015). Social Empowerment Programmes include the microcredit programmes and support and rehabilitation programmes such as housing support and agricultural rehabilitation.

## **RELATING DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS WITH CAPABILITY EXPANSION**

This section will provide a discussion on how the three concepts of my study can be constructed in order to analyse the role of poverty reduction programmes on development through capability expansion. The central question is how can capability expansion play a role in human development? In this study poverty is construed to denote deprivation. The poor are therefore those who are deprived from basic human needs (Kabeer, 1999a).

Looking from an 'end' and 'means' perspective, poverty can be considered as an 'end' whereas the resources needed to avoid deprivation can be the perceived as the 'means'. Under this consideration if poverty is the 'end', SSNs can be viewed as 'means' for lessening the deprivation in their provision of resources to the deprived. This understanding subsequently encourages the idea of an efficient resource delivery mechanism. This perspective encourages efficient means as a useful component of dealing deprivation.

*“Human need is about more than physiological survival; it is also about living a healthy active life and participating in the life of the community. These are the ‘beings and doings’ that people value and that Sen (1987) calls agency achievements. A more inclusive definition of basic needs would therefore encompass culturally defined levels of physical well-being (health, housing, clothing, sanitation) while a still broader definition results if the definition results if the concept is stretched to cover the more intangible aspects of deprivation-powerlessness, dependence, isolation (Chambers in Kabeer, 1999a, p.139).*

But, on the other hand poverty can be seen as ‘means’ viewed from the entitlement perspective of Sen (1981) since the cause of poverty is not only due to inadequate entitlement, but also as a result of “*structurally reproduced distributional inequalities*” (Kabeer, 1999a, p.140). In Bangladesh, women’s entitlement highly rest on perceived legitimacy - social norms and conventions, religious beliefs and practices rather than legal contracts (Kabeer, 1999a, p.140). This breeds the growth of inequality which exist at the societal and household levels. Inequalities in household or social distribution system make women prioritize the cultural system over their abilities. The following example clarifies this point.

*“I visited landless women with earth cutting and non-traditional form of work. According to the village mattabars (leaders), the spectacle of women from their village engaging in public forms of manual labour would bring shame on the community. A few husbands also objected to their wives joining the project, using arguments about their own self-esteem and honour. For many landless women, however, the project offered a route to independent resources and they choose to defy both village opinion and their husbands’ threats.....Poor women may value self-esteem and autonomy, but define it very differently both from men in their own household and from women from more prosperous household (Kabeer, 1999a, p.140).*

Therefore, rather than focusing on means and end point, the view of a poverty reduction programmes should start from the deprived, considering the deprived not only knowledgeable but also seeing it as a viewpoint from below - “*viewpoint of those who stand at the crossroads of various forms of inequality*” (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1999, p. 199). The desired end point of poverty reduction programmes are human well-being. Human well-being can be made up by three goals of survival, security and self-esteem (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1999).

*“Policy formulation for a human centred development therefore requires that priority be given to interventions which meet the basic survival needs of the poor and that the means adopted also serve to strengthen security of livelihoods and reduce dependency relationships....it is necessary to ensure that these broad goals of survival, security and agency are met for women as well as men and we may then need to ask how the survival and security needs of poor women, as well as their*

*ability to exercise agency and choice over their own lives*”(Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1999, p. 200).

The above statement points to the important requirements of human centred policies or policies which will provide human centred development. In analysing the statement one can identify the basic criteria which need to be considered in the drafting of policies. It suggests that developing a human centred development policy needs to combine all three – (1) meeting basic survival needs for the poor, (2) means adopted to strengthen security and (3) reduce dependency relationships. With these considerations, I want to proceed in my argumentation with this tripartite combination. I consider the above statement extremely important for this study because researchers such as Chambers’ (1988) and Jodha’s (1985) argument for poor, well-being consists of the same three goals as survival, security and self-esteem. Also in human centred policies it is necessary to ensure that the three goals are met for women as well as men (Kabeer and Subramanian, 1999). Under this policy guideline I place poverty reduction programmes as a way of achieving the goals.

SSNs are representatives of poverty reduction programmes. In working under the guideline of human centred development policies therefore these programmes are in theory supposed to combine the issues of meeting survival needs, strengthening security and reducing dependency. This attention is applicable in the context of Bangladesh where gender inequality is high and women’s ability of exercising agency and choice differ from men. SSNs are studied with regard to whether they are attaining the goals or not under a society that has gender inequalities. Placing food security as a development issue enables this research to explore how SSNs are meeting basic survival needs of people. Considering food security as a basic concept provides the opportunity of observing the condition of a basic need of ‘food’ and whether the deprived are ‘food secure’ or not. This helps the research to focus on both the aspects of basic need and security. It can be argued that there are other basic needs to observe and security also covers a broader area. However, in this study I target food because it is one of the major components of survival. I hence consider it as a basic survival need which when obtained in proper amount enables a person to become food secure. Concentrating on food security therefore gives the opportunity for this research to cover both areas of survival and security.

In the context of Bangladesh, where women’s ability to mobilise resources are curtailed by cultural norms, women’s *“entitlements are not determined in perpetuity, they are often changed through negotiation, bargaining, conflict, overruling, force, redistribution. Women and children’s entitlements often not only allows them lesser claims on food but they have less power to change the distribution of entitlements or enforce their share of existing distribution”* (Kabeer, 1990, p.7).

Concentrating on a broader view, the last sentence of the above statement provides a guide to concentrate not only on entitlement but also on increasing the women's bargaining power. This upturn in power can be developed by agency. Agency and power can also be characterised as a component of reducing dependency because it increases women's abilities to choose between action and non-action (this issue has also been described in details in section 2.1.4). Agency no doubt can therefore rectify inequalities that impair well-being. According to Sen (2010, p.190):

*“The well-being aspect and the agency aspect of women's movements inevitably have a substantial intersection. And yet they cannot but be different at a foundational level, since the role of a person as an ‘agent’ is fundamentally distinct from (though not independent of) the role of the same person as a ‘patient’. The fact that the agent may have to see herself as a patient as well does not alter the additional modalities and responsibilities that are inescapably associated with the agency of a person”.*

The power of reducing inequality or injustice is a vital component of development. Capability approach in this research utilises three major concepts *capability*, *freedom* and *functioning*. Sen (1992) also describes capabilities as freedom which signifies the power of a woman to choose or decide. There is no doubt therefore that agency can provide capabilities (as well as freedom) to women to make their own decisions. Decision-making will increase the “*power to change the distribution of entitlement and enforce their share of existing distribution*”. Hence, studying SSN's impact with regard to their expansion of capability leads this research to reach conclusions on whether SSNs in Bangladesh are acting as a human centred development programme combining the three necessary goals. The following diagram illustrates this position.

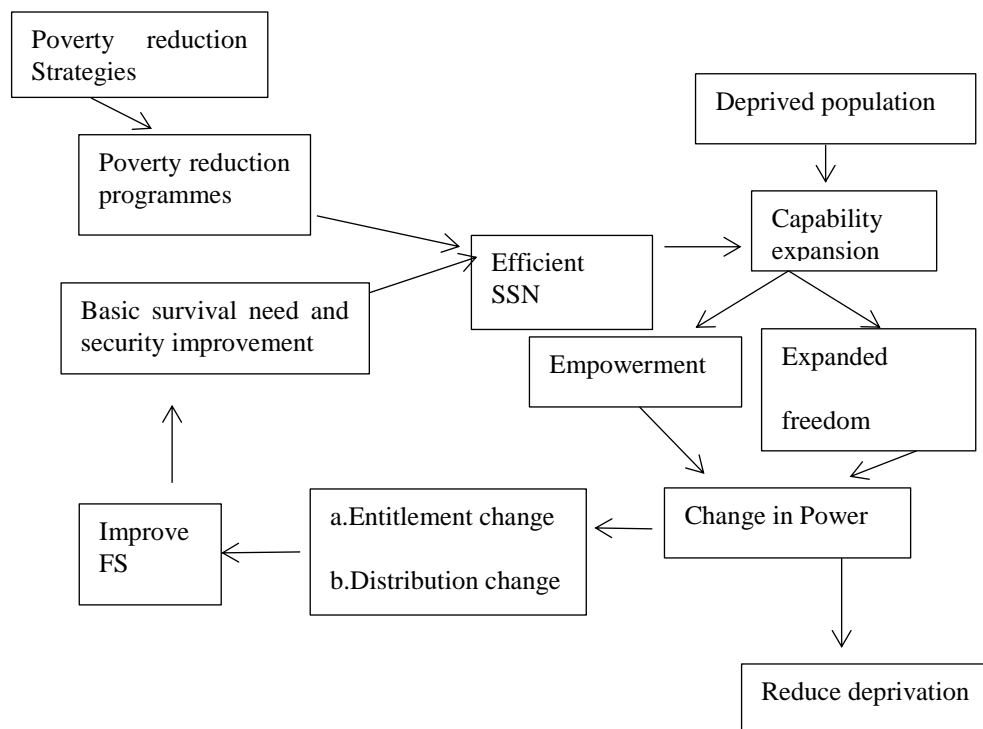


Figure 2.7 Capability expansion for development

Special notes (to understand the figure)

1. The poverty reduction programmes (such as SSNs) are development programmes designed based on the goals of PRS. PRS of Bangladesh address both income and human poverty. They cover three goals (1) meeting basic survival needs for the poor, (2) means adopted to strengthen security and (3) reduce dependency relationship. An efficient SSN (mentioned in this diagram) refers to development programmes which cover the three goals.
2. Capability expansion can develop from (1) Resource distribution (asset, money, food), (2) Providing training (skill work, knowledge on health, law or education programmes), (3) Employment generation (public works program is an example. Or developing skilled population can give rise of small self-entrepreneurs).
3. Empowerment brings change in power or ability to exercise choice which “*can be thought of in terms of changes in three inter-related dimensions which make up choice: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; and*

*achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. These dimensions are inter-dependent because changes in each contributes to, and benefits from, changes in the others. Thus, the achievements of a particular moment are translated into enhanced resources or agency, and hence capacity of making choices, at a later moment in time” (Kabeer, 2001, p.19)*



## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of this study. The research is based on a theoretical framework which explores the role of poverty reduction strategies on development by focusing on two SSN programmes (VGD and CFPR) with reference to their contribution of deprived women. It adopts a mixed method by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Empirical research may adopt an intensive or extensive research design where both have their strengths and weaknesses. Both practices are found in the social sciences where extensive approaches (e.g. quantitative research) deal with large numbers and provide the significance of relationships among the variables in the research. This type of research identifies the population, defines the group on the basis of shared attributes such as same age, income, housing condition, and searches for quantitative relationships of the variables. It is a well-practiced method for finding the relationship of variables but it does not address the casual groups directly. It deals with a group of identical population rather than particular individuals. On the other hand an intensive research method (e.g. qualitative research) starts with an individual (not in all cases individual people but individual cases etc.) and seeks for casual relationship in a qualitative manner. Therefore, intensive research has been identified as strong in providing casual explanations and interpreting meanings in a context but takes a long time, hence normally deals with small data. On the other hand extensive research deals with a large population or representative sample but lacks in explanatory penetration (Sayer, 2000, p. 21).

In order to overcome these limitations of intensive and extensive problems scholars and researchers often go for mixed methods research (combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same research). Mixed method designs are feasible in social science research while searching for qualitative understanding of a problem where there are quantifiable indicators in the research area. Methodological pragmatists (e.g Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) argue that researchers should select the method needed for the optimum result, even if it involves the interaction of qualitative and quantitative methods. The logic of argument is that neither method can on its own be sufficient for a complete analysis, hence their combination (Creswell et al, 2004 in McEvoy and Rechards, 2006, p. 68).

This chapter is structured in the following way: it introduces the overall research design by providing an overview of the study area, data collection and analysis. The

analysis covers the procedure used for both qualitative and quantitative data storage and analysis.

## STUDY DESIGN

The empirical study on the two selected SSNs was carried out in two different time periods. The study on CFPR was conducted in July 2010 whereas the study of VGD was conducted from June to August, 2013. For a better understanding the study design of CFPR and VGD will be described under separate headings.

**Entering the field and research position:** My twelve years work in policy making and implementation within the government of Bangladesh (district levels in the Ministry of finance and Ministry of public administration) offered me a connection and link with the programme operating bodies, both government and non-government which gave me easy access and support to the programme organisations. I presented myself as a researcher from Aalborg University, Denmark to the programme participants to whom I clearly described the research purpose and mentioned that the gathered information would only be used for research purposes and that there was no involvement of the programme authorities in my study.

### SAMPLE AREA, SELECTION CRITERIA AND DATA COLLECTION FROM CFPR

The study area was one of the poorest districts in Bangladesh *Rangpur Sadar*. The BRAC operated CFPR programme in this area from 2002 to 2007. Collecting data after three years of programme completion intended to explore the role of CFPR in the participant's life by observing their livelihood in 2010. CFPR was conducted by BRAC in three poor districts of Bangladesh. *Rangpur Sadar* was selected as sample area in this study for its high vulnerability to seasonal hunger.

Data was collected from 21 households purposively. A purposive sample selection was done to focus on the particular participating household of the research's interest. The research interest was to find out the role of the programme on participating household's lifestyle and explore the factors that contributed to either positive or little or no impact on the socio-economic status of the households. Therefore, it was necessary to identify the households with positive or little or no impact. BRAC research and evaluation division had a database regarding the participant's economic status from 2002 and 2007. To find participant's under the above different impact categories, I observed BRAC data regarding the economic

status and selected twenty one household purposively where according to BRAC data there were all types of households (either positive or little or no impact ).<sup>24</sup>

The next phase was entering the field for collecting detailed data from the selected households. This time data collection from the households was based on interview and observation. I developed semi-structured questionnaire to help collect this data (Appendix C). Since CFPR was women focused, responses from the representing women of the household became the emphasis of the interviews.

Lastly, eight households among the 21 identified were selected purposively. I included both successful and little or no success (improvement) in livelihood. I collected the data by observing the lifestyle and taking oral historical accounts of the representing women. This was done with an intention to explore the trajectories of success and no success.

A research assistant from BRAC also talked with the participants based on the same questionnaire which enabled me to cross check the data.

### **SAMPLE AREA, SELECTION CRITERIA AND DATA COLLECTION FROM VGD PARTICIPANTS**

The study area for VGD was *Sonargaon* upazila, situated in the district of Narayanganj where the VGD programme was running. *Sonargaon* upazilla consists of 10 Unions.<sup>25</sup> Data was collected from Unions. Due to severe political unrest and frequent transport strikes during the year 2013, Upazilla was selected because of its close location to the capital Dhaka.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> BRAC's research fellow Mr. Narayan Das provided and assisted me with the data set (letter attached in Appendix).

<sup>25</sup> To serve the administrative purpose of local government in Bangladesh it has been divided into 7 divisions, 64 districts, 493 upazilas and 4550 unions. Where districts function as the administrative unit of sub division, upazila as sub district and union as sub upazila.

<sup>26</sup> The political unrest and violence in Bangladesh which started from the year 2011 was severe in 2013. The opposition (led by Bangladesh Nationalist Party) of the government party (Bangladesh Awami League) called for bloody countrywide strike with a demand of the ruling party to step down by handing over the power to a neutral caretaker government. This created an uncontrolled political violence with around 322 people killed in political clashes during the year 2013. .For details see <http://world.time.com/2013/11/06/four-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-chaos-in-bangladesh/>

Two types of data was collected from this area: (1) quantitative data which covered three hundred programme participant's interviews and (2) qualitative data which consisted of observation and interview of twenty three programme participant's.

For the quantitative data a total of 300 women (30 from each Union) were selected randomly by taking their addresses from the VGD register. The Upazila Nirbahi Office had a register with the address and identity number of the VGD participants which consisted their time period of participation. The participants were enrolled in the two years programme which started from January, 2012 with an end date of December 2013. Data was collected from June to August 2013. Therefore, respondents were almost at the last stage of their programme participation (participation during one and a half year).

Data was collected by interviewing the VGD participating women using a semi structured questionnaire (Appendix A). To explore the FS status (Individual and household FS) the questionnaire contained 9 core questions based on the FAST tool (described table 5.3 in chapter 5).<sup>27</sup> There was a minor change in question number eight in the study questionnaire. The FAST tool question number eight is "In the past 12 months how often did your family take food (rice, lentils etc.) on credit (or loan) from a local shop?" (Coats et al, p.94). As the VGD women were receiving rice, the question was changed to "In the past 12 months, how often did your family purchase rice?" Additionally, the questionnaire covered other questions related to their demographic and social information and dietary patterns to explore the related socio economic factors affecting FS.

From the three hundred participants, twenty three participants were selected randomly for better understanding of their lifestyle and an exploration of their coping strategies during the crisis period. At this stage random sampling was employed for representation accuracy. This part was based on qualitative data collected with a semi structured questionnaire (Appendix-B) consisting of both open and close ended questions. The questionnaire covered queries about coping strategies during crises and perceptions regarding the programme support and operation. Data was collected by visiting each participant's house and soliciting their opinions. Face to face interviews of the VGD participating women were undertaken. In some cases other family members such as their children or relatives were present along with the programme participating women while they responded to the interview questions. Detailed information on the family composition, household income and the support from VGD were collected from the women.

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<sup>27</sup> Described in chapter 1. For details please see Coats et al (2003, p. 93-94), Measuring Food Insecurity: Going Beyond Indicators of Income and Anthropometry, Available at [http://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/Measuring-Food-Insecurity-Bangladesh-2003\\_0.pdf](http://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/Measuring-Food-Insecurity-Bangladesh-2003_0.pdf)

Among 23 participants', only 13 allowed the researcher to record their voice. In some cases (especially when answering the questions related to VGD operation) they did not want their voice to be recorded as they considered the questions sensitive and answered in a low voice particularly when there were some other programme participants besides them. They had a fear that if the information reached the administrators, support to them would be stopped. In these cases therefore, participants preferred to write their responses on paper.

Ten social workers from the Upazilla office were hired to collect the quantitative data. A detailed briefing on how to collect data was organized by me in the Upazilla office before commencing data collection. Each of the social workers collected data from 30 locations in fifteen days (two locations each day). I accompanied one of the social workers on each of these days.

### **DATA COLLECTION FROM SECONDARY SOURCES**

Secondary sources of data included existing literature on poverty trends of the country, poverty reduction strategies and challenges, existing SSNs, programme document and literature on perceptions of programme participants.

### **DATA STORAGE AND ANALYSIS**

The research approach deals with both quantitative and qualitative data. All interviews were conducted in native language "Bangla". The following section represents how data was stored and analysed.

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA STORAGE AND ANALYSIS**

The quantitative data were stored in IBM SPSS version 22 data sheets. The empirical analysis of quantitative data employed IBM SPSS statistics 22 version. The analysis provided findings of descriptive statistics of the participating women's socio-economic and FS status. In addition ordered probit model was used for econometric modelling. Econometric modelling was employed to highlight the relation between individual and household FS with associated factors.

Ordered probit or ordinal logit models are mostly used in cases where the outcome variables are not continuous and there is a sequential ordering. Although the ordered probit model was initially introduced in the bio-statistical application (Jackman, 2000), it has gradually gained appreciation in the social sciences (Mallick & Rafi, 2010; Scott, Goldberg, & Mayo, 1997). This model is a straight forward extension of the binary probit model where the outcome variable only takes the values of 0 and 1. There are several benefits that prompted the use of this model

over any other conventional methods/models. First, the dependent variable in this study has an insight sequential meaning for each of the code used to construct individual and households food security. During the data collection process, the questionnaire was constructed in a way that shows a natural sequential ordered (please see the variable description for more details). Second, although Ordinary Least Square (OLS) technique is quite commonly used in the academic literature, it was not suitable in this study due to the nature of data. The values for each of the individual food security questions were derived on a five scale basis from least to best food security. However, the OLS technique literally does not differentiate between these 5 categories. Furthermore, considering the behavioural perspective, if two respondents give a similar answer, the OLS assumes that both of them have similar attitude (Mallick & Rafi, 2010). However, this is not true most of the time because there are fundamental socio-economical and other differences between the respondents despite the same answers given by both of them. The probit model uses the underlying distribution of the parameters other than the response itself and that eliminates such kinds of problems. Furthermore, in OLS, the linear probability model with binary (ordered) outcome variables violates the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality errors. Hence, the OLS estimator will not be best linear unbiased estimator (BLUE) in this context. That is why ordered probit model was used in this study as opposed to OLS or any other similar method.

## QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

According to Ritchie and Spencer (1994) “ *Qualitative data analysis is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the analyst’s role*” (p. 176). The method used in analysing the data therefore needs to help the detection. Certain steps are involved in detection which mainly depends on the research questions.

Two types of qualitative data were collected in this research as (1) primary data and (2) secondary data.

The primary qualitative data were based on detailed a questionnaire consisting of both open and close ended questions (Appendix B and C), oral account of the programme participant’s and notes taken by me in the field. The oral accounts were transcribed in native language “Bangla”. Therefore storage of data and the first step of analysis was documentation. The documentation was based on recorded voices of the women, oral accounts and information gathered through the interviews. This helped to keep track of the gathered information. In addition secondary data were collected from existing literature.

The ‘framework analysis’ approach was been employed for analysing qualitative data of this research. Framework analysis was employed as it is “*explicitly*

*developed in the context of policy research” (Lacey & Luff , 2001, p.13). This approach allows for insertion of an existing concept and because of this, it was deemed appropriate for this research. In addition, framework analysis is appropriate in qualitative research where there are pre-set questions which need to be addressed in a short time scale (Lacey & Luff , 2001, p.39).*

*“The strength of an approach like ‘Framework’ is that by following a well-defined procedure, it is possible to reconsider and rework ideas precisely because the analytical process has been documented and is therefore accessible” (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p.177).*

Therefore the analysis of qualitative data followed the steps of (1) familiarisation, (2) identifying a thematic framework (3) indexing (4) charting and (5) mapping and interpretation.

**Familiarization** was the first step of analysis. This step involved listening to the recorded voices, reading transcripts and notes.

**Identifying a thematic framework** involved identifying the main issues, concepts and themes which formed the foundation of examining the data. At this stage of identifying the framework or index, the analysis was based upon a priori issue. The priori issues are the issues presented in the research sub-questions for which the specific study was being conducted and introduced through the questions. For example in the research aiming to explore the women’s mechanism of coping with food shortage during crisis the main research question was “What type of coping mechanism do vulnerable women adopt in securing themselves with food during shock or crisis periods?” Developing the thematic framework can be illustrated from the study where a set of questions were concerned with coping and survival strategies, gender related issues and programme perception. These questioning areas led to the indexing phase.

*“Indexes provide a mechanism for labelling data in manageable ‘bites’ for subsequent retrieval and exploration. They should therefore not be over-elaborated in detail at this stage as the analyst needs to overview of all categories”.* (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p.180)

Therefore the thematic framework consists of the questions as topic guide such as (1) crisis in lifecycle, (2) coping and survival strategies and so on. Based on these questions indexes were developed (for example 1.1 health related, 1.2 loss of jobs, 1.3 problem with housing, 1.4 affected by natural disaster and 1.5 other).

**Indexing** was the process of applying the frame to the data set in textual form. This was mainly applied for individual interviews where indexes of transcripts were recorded in the side of a margin.

*1. “It was hard to manage food for the family and medicine both at the same time. I skipped one meal and went for medicine. Medicine was very important as I wanted my husband to be well”*

**1.1 Prioritizing medicine over food**

**1.2 Reducing food consumption to bear medicine expenses**

**Charting** involved creating headings from the framework and developing charts. The charts were developed based on each theme covering all respondents. For example the chart covered all themes in it.

Table 3. 1 An example of charting

<b>Chart:1 coping and survival strategies</b>			
	Working as maid	Joining a service	Micro-finance loan
<b>Pori Banu</b>			
<b>Sanjida</b>			
<b>Taslina</b>			

At last, the stage of **mapping and interpretation** covered defining the concept, finding association and providing an explanation. In my research the most important concept capability is very much dependent on real freedom and this real freedom can be achieved through agency of a woman. Sitting in a house where gender discrimination exists and observing the respondent expressing her feelings against inequality indicated her freedom which came from her agency role. For example, when Pori Banu was speaking about the culture of dowry (chapter 6) and how she was treated by her in laws after marriage, her mother in law left the place which clearly indicated her (mother in laws) agitation. But on the other hand it pointed the freedom of Pori Banu expressing her feelings and speaking against gender discrimination. This indicated that Pori Banu had the courage of speaking against injustice. This showed a relationship between her courage of speaking which was gained by her employment and contribution to the family’s economy. Therefore, the conclusion drawn from this discussion was that agency role empowered her and created her freedom.



## APPLYING MIXED METHOD

According to Bryman (2012) there are sixteen ways of combining qualitative and quantitative research in mixed method such as triangulation, offset, completeness, process, different research questions, explanation, unexpected result, instrument development, sampling, credibility, context, illustration, utility, confirm and discover, diversity of views, enhancement (2012, p.633).

This research used two ways of combining the data (1) different research questions and (2) completeness. A way of combining both types of data in **different research questions** entails making a decision on which research question is best answered using which method (Bryman, 2012, p.640). **Completeness** denotes that a more complete answer of a research query is possible to achieve by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods which indicates that the gap left by one method can be filled by the other (Bryman, 2012, p.637). Therefore, this research used these two specific ways of combining data for analysis.

This research had four specific-queries which ended towards the general question. The four specific queries were answered by both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The first query “How do SSNs plan and implement interventions to promote higher levels of food security?” was explored by a qualitative exploration based on secondary data. As the data was gathered from literature it was appropriate to explain the findings based on the definition, theories and explanations through the qualitative method.

The intention of the second sub query was to explore the FS status of women participating in SSNs and find the socio economic factors contributing to the food insecurity status. This study had the intension of measuring the FS status of a population. The basic difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that

*“quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researchers do not. ....quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis...by contrast qualitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data”* (Bryman, 2012, p.35-36).

Therefore, since the sub query in this research intended to find out the FS status of a specific population and relate the contributory factors affecting the status, quantitative data was much more appropriate to address it. On the other hand, sub question three intended to find the coping mechanisms adopted by this group to secure themselves with food. This was a query which was not possible to measure or answer with numbers. It required “words” from the selected population which was possible to explore through a qualitative research. But altogether these two

methods gave completeness to the research by providing an overview of the study populations FS status, contributory socio-economic factor and exploring their mechanisms of achieving food during crises.

The last query intended to answer the question “how can innovative approaches make SSN more effective”. This research needed to explore an in-depth study on a different approach (applied in CFPR) and explore a realistic way of programme operation. Therefore, it was necessary to collect participating women’s conception on their lifestyle and programme operation after completing SSN programme participation. This query also needed “words” for a better understanding. In addition “numbers” or measures were explored to find the impact of the programme on poverty reduction. These words and numbers both supplement each other and give completeness to the study.

Combining all four specific queries led the research to an explanation of the general question “How effective are social safety nets in improving livelihoods, food security and capabilities of poor distressed women in Bangladesh?” This step was qualitative in nature and followed framework analysis. The research observed food security and livelihood as components of development and SSN’s as representing poverty reduction programmes. The first step of analysis (familiarisation) started by reading the four chapters. The four chapters provided an overview of the information gathered and their range of diversity. Listing key ideas and themes such as FS and SSN came in the stage of identifying a thematic frame work. The thematic framework consists of the topic guide and index. The main topic guide was poverty reduction programmes and development. Under this head SSN and FS were placed as representing these two issues. The part index was highly rooted on these two issues. Figure 3.1 clarifies how combining of topic guides, index and research notes, explicate the stages of developing a thematic framework.

The indexing step is mainly applied when there is an individual or group interview. In addition charting is also done in the case of data collection through the same questionnaire. At this stage of analysis these two steps were not necessary because this stage was analysing the results derived from the four sub studies (studies to address the specific questions of the research). Hence the next part involved mapping and interpretation. This step was a combination of defining concepts, mapping ranges and nature of phenomena, finding association, providing explanation and coming to a conclusion (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p.186). The four empirical chapters (4, 5,6 and 7) provides discussion on concepts and their associations addressing specific research queries and ends by coming to a conclusion. Moreover, the general research questions mapping and interpretation has been described in Chapter 1 and 8.

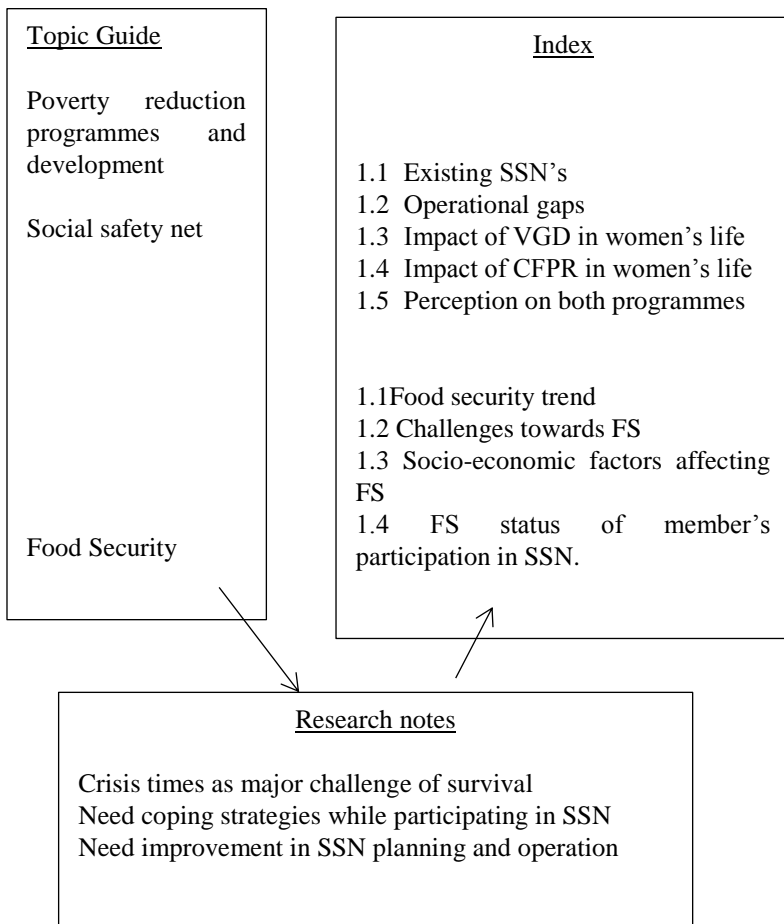


Figure 3. 1 Developing thematic frame work



# CHAPTER 4. SOCIAL SAFETY NETS AS INTERVENTIONS FOR PROMOTING HIGHER LEVELS OF FOOD SECURITY<sup>28</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The article offers a critical understanding of the role of social safety nets (SSN) in ensuring food security for the poor and vulnerable. Given its poverty situation and the specific role of SSN policies aiming to implement a variety of food security policies, Bangladesh aptly serves as a good example. The country started these programme operations after its independence with a target of reducing the poverty level which had accelerated to 80 per cent after the devastating cyclone and famine in 1974. The paper attempts to fill a gap in the existing literature by addressing SSN support in ensuring food security to the vulnerable population. Moreover, the findings provide critical policy recommendations for designing effective programme operations for the provision of food security.

## INTRODUCTION

Estimates from the United Nations show that the world's population will increase about 80 million every year and reach almost 8 billion in 2020. The continuous population growth notably in the developing countries indicates a simultaneous rise in the global demand of food consumption. FAO points out that almost 870 million people were chronically undernourished in 2010-2012 with the vast majority in the South (FAO, 2011) and many are deemed to be poor since they lack access to the most fundamental basics in life.

Survival and poverty are linked and those who are not food secure and not capable to lead an active and healthy life may be defined as poor.<sup>29</sup> The World food summit (1996) identified food security as an alarming issue therefore necessitating attention and necessary action at least on the part of the developing countries. Besides the

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<sup>28</sup> This chapter has been submitted as an article in *Journal of South Asian Development*, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> "Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" ( FAO, 2002, Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4671e/y4671e06.htm#TopOfPage> )

main challenge of poverty, other problems like disability and factors related towards utilisation for ensuring food security remain on top of the development agenda. Disabilities may be connected to gender discrimination, age or physical challenges. Disaster prone areas and remote locations add to create food security vulnerabilities. Education, awareness and cultural practices of the population are also important issues related to ensuring the eradication of hunger (Mishra and Hossain, 2005).

One solution to overcome these problems has been the adoption of a variety of antipoverty policies guaranteeing food security. SSNs were proposed in the 1980s and integrated with anti-poverty policies as a protective mechanism and came together with social adjustment (Guhan, 1994) for protection and promotion of better livelihoods among the poor.<sup>30</sup> SSNs came as a compensatory measure and a way to mitigate the social costs of the World Bank induced structural adjustment (Vivian 1994).

The concept of SSN's was introduced in the 'World Development Report' 1990 as a targeted means of protecting the vulnerable in order to address chronic and transient poverty (Lipton 1997). In the late 1990's the concept was criticised as a policy converting the poor into 'passive recipients' who do not make any distinct contributions to sustainable poverty reduction (Devereux, 2002). As the SSNs are mainly public funded programmes, it was considered a waste of public resources and the affordability of bearing such programmes was also questioned for low income countries. But a 2009 study showed that these minimum transfers are not that costly in terms of per capita (ILO and WHO, 2009).

SSNs can be both short and long term. The short run can support the poor with an immediate relief to survive in shock situations while the long run SSNs can help to protect the households as well as individual's consumption and gradually move towards an improved livelihood by enhancing productivity and savings (Pradhan et al, 2013). SSNs can also help poor people to enter the resource basket and increase market access. Therefore, SSNs may be seen as a government tool which can lead towards sustainable poverty reduction by creating opportunities, security and empowerment.

This paper offers a critical understanding of the role of SSNs in ensuring food security for the poor. Bangladesh serves as an example due to its poverty situation

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<sup>30</sup> Social safety nets are those interventions that provide targeted cash or in-kind support or that help the poor and vulnerable in society to access basic social services (Neubourg, 2002, p. 11)

and the specific role of SSN policies aim to ensure food security. Presently seven SSN's operate to provide the vulnerable provision of food security (Ministry of Finance, 2015). These programmes are mainly government operated and monitored through different ministries. The country started SSNs after its independence in 1971 with the target of reducing the poverty level which had accelerated to 80 per cent after the devastating cyclone and famine in 1974 (Kabeer, 2002). Various scholars have discussed the effectiveness of SSNs (Devereux, 2002, Alderman and Hoddinott, 2007, Alderman and Yemtsov, 2013, Khuda 2011). However there is a lack of attention on the impact of these programmes in providing food security to the vulnerable. With this background this study intends to raise the following questions: (1) What are the major challenges in achieving food security? (2) What type of SSN's are presently operated in the country with an aim of ensuring food security? (3) What are the initial reactions of the poor? And finally, (4) what ingredients can be accommodated in the mechanisms to make the vulnerable sustainably food secure?

The paper is structured as follows. The first part highlights the relationships of poverty, food security and social protection. It is followed by an overview of the poverty and food security situation and related policy trends of Bangladesh. The third part discusses the conceptual framework with the 'Capability Approach' and its applicability. The fourth part elaborates present SSNs of the country and their limitations. And the concluding section will give policy suggestions for effective policy framing.

## **POVERTY, FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL SAFETY NET**

The poor are vulnerable and in constant danger of starvation as they lack income, resources and the ability of meeting their basic needs.<sup>31</sup> They are sensitive towards social, environmental and other shocks, as a small adverse unexpected event may bring a huge negative effect on their immediate livelihood. Poverty can be measured in several ways. The World Bank (2008a) defines poverty based on income or calorie consumption. The poor, according to them, are those living on less than USD 1.25 per day. On the other hand a regular intake below 2401 Kcal per capita per day for the rural population and 2070 kcal per capita per day for the urban population are also defined as poor (Mehta and Venkatraman, 2000). In Bangladesh the Household Income and Expenditure survey measures the food poverty line based on a standard nutritional requirement of 2122 kcal per person per day (HIES 2010, p. 59). Consuming less food than the amount required for a healthy status can be defined as undernourishment.

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<sup>31</sup> Vulnerability can be defined as '*the exposer and sensitivity to livelihood shocks*' (Ellis, 2003, p. 4).

The definition of food security is broader as it requires adequate food availability and the ability of acquiring it. Not only is producing sufficient food but also the entitlement of producing, purchasing, receiving and utilizing is included in the food security concept (Maxwell, 1992). This also refers to the inability of acquiring adequate diet in the present and having a risk to the same situation in the future. Food insecurity can be defined as chronic and transitory where the first is a continuous inadequate diet due to lack of ability to acquire food and the latter is a temporary decline in the access to adequate food.

It is a highly contested issue whether food insecurity is the outcome of food availability or low purchasing power. Some evidence shows that there was enough food supply in the 1970s. Future projections indicate the ability, globally speaking, to keep pace with the food demand. However there is still a large portion of food insecure people in the developing countries which shows that availability is not the main cause of food insecurity but rather the low purchasing capacity (WB, 1986).

Though the issue and concepts of food security have been discussed over the past 30 years, there persists a lack of precise estimates of food insecure people of the world. Vulnerability, poverty and food insecurity are very closely related issues. It is difficult to rely on independent identification and the population included in either of these groups is in most cases helpless in shock situations and unaccounted for. In this respect, SSN's are generally targeted towards the poor and vulnerable to enable them cope with shocks.

SSN programmes are *“non-contributory transfer programmes targeted in some manner to the poor and those vulnerable to shocks”* (FAO, 2011, p. 4). These programmes protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes: chronic incapacity to work and earn (chronic poverty) and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides minimal means for survival with few reserves (transient poverty). Chronic incapacity to work or earn is usually a result of physical or mental disability or long-term illness (Subbarao, 2003) but is exacerbated in shock situations. SSNs can be instruments of dealing adequately with these types of situations by directly addressing poverty and vulnerability. They may potentially bring advantage towards the vulnerable by redistributing assets or income which provide some earning and give an immediate and sometimes long term impact on poverty, managing risk and investing in future (World Bank, 2008, FAO, 2011). Moreover, SSN's contribute toward the overall development policy and promote growth by reducing poverty, handling risk management, providing equal opportunity towards the vulnerable and giving social protection (Alderman and Hoddinott, 2007, Alderman and Yemtsov, 2013, Khuda 2011). This helps to ease the livelihood and reduce poverty by creating assets during crisis periods. Additionally, it may develop some savings (Gertler et al 2012, Mahmuda et al, 2014).



The most common forms of SSN are (1) Cash transferring towards the vulnerable by transferring cash to the poor (2) Conditional cash transfer (3) Public works programme by accommodating unskilled workers with jobs during slack seasons (4) Asset transfers by transferring food or in-kind benefits (5) Subsidies by controlling prices and (6) Fee waivers by reducing cost for using public benefits. The three main goals of these SSNs are to reduce poverty, increase political acceptability of social adjustment and contribute to institutional reforms.<sup>32</sup>

These goals can be achieved by the programmes if they are properly designed and applied in the right circumstances (Vivian, 1994, p. 5). There are some studies indicating the positive effect of SSN in the 2008 food crisis period by helping the poor and vulnerable to maintain their access towards food (WB, 2008) and provide better nourishment for children (Adato and Bassett, 2008).

## **POVERTY, VULNERABILITY AND POLICY TRENDS IN BANGLADESH**

### **POVERTY TREND AND CHALLENGES TOWARDS FOOD SECURITY**

Bangladesh is a developing country situated in South Asia which became independent in 1971. The total population is 160.4 million people (World population report, 2015). Around 32 per cent of the people are poor and malnourished (HIES 2010). The country has shown a remarkable development in its efforts to reduce poverty although going through several crises as the massive cyclone and war in the 1971 and famine in 1974. These occurrences skewed the poverty rate up to 80% but it went down significantly to the level of 57% in the mid 1990's. But this decline was mainly observed in the urban areas with 35% while the poverty rate in the rural areas was around 57 % (World Bank, 1998, Rahman et al., 1998, Kabeer, 2002). Although the real per capita income of the people increased in 2000 still the national poverty rate is 31.5% (HIES, 2010). This indicates that

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<sup>32</sup> Normally SSNs are targeted towards the victim or vulnerable and has very visible action of addressing the social issues (if implemented successfully). The targets of the SSNs include both groups and organisations. This mechanism helps to strengthen civil society, support new leaders and restructures power relations. Moreover, it gives the vulnerable a way and opportunity to participate in a meaningful manner. Thus in a broader sense the process and objectives of implementation of the social funds are seen as “*Promoting equitable and democratic development process*” (Vivian, 1994, p. 5).

Bangladesh still remains a country of low income with significant poverty and deprivation (World Bank, 2013, IFAD, 2013).

The poor in Bangladesh are vulnerable particularly in relation to shock events such as the immediate impact of climate change, economic, social, political, health and lifecycles. Climatic shocks occur due to flooding during the rainy seasons, cyclone and drought. Economic shocks come along with the climate shocks and also include river erosion, eviction, loss of jobs, and they may become homeless and lose their assets and property (if they have any). The same situation occurs when they are evicted from their accommodation due to illegal occupancy (this happens mainly in the urban areas where the poor and homeless take shelter in illegal slums). The political and social shocks arise due to unstable political situations, prolonged strikes (*hartal*) and extortion by crime syndicates (*Mastan*). The health shocks are related to long-time illness or death of the main income earner as well as other members of the family. The life cycle shocks come from property division (after the death of father), expenses for daughter's marriage, paying dowry and illness related expenditures (Quisumbing, 2007, p. 8). The effect of such shock situations may decrease income of the affected households and gradually or overnight escalate towards a permanent food insecurity situation.

Since independence different governments have strived to ensure food security of the rural poor households through the implementation of a variety of policies to eradicate poverty. In spite of the constitutional commitment of ensuring food security, the number of food insecure people in the country stands over 60 million (HIES, 2010). In order to achieve food security for the whole population the government needs to make food available to everybody. Households need to have enough capacity to access food and the people need to adopt proper utilisation mechanisms. In this way food production in itself becomes a political issue while at the same time remaining a government sanctioned obligation.

Bangladesh has become self-sufficient in its staple food (rice) production. The country has tripled the production from 1971 to 2012 at 33 million tons up from 11 million tonnes (The Daily Star, 20 March 2013). On the other hand the country imports almost 3 million tons wheat, the second staple food, from developing agencies as food aid. This indicates that rice and wheat availability is sufficient. On the other hand the poultry industry is weak implying insufficiency in the supply of meat, egg and milk. This is a contradiction since there is a rich biological resource base for fish production and the country is crisscrossed by rivers and lakes. The pond aquaculture has been growing in recent years although this produce is primarily for export (The Daily Star, 20 March 2013).

Food availability and accessibility can also be achieved by the poor producing their own food. This can meet a part of the availability requirements. Official figures show that 52 percent of the country's total household's occupation is agriculture

(Ministry of Agriculture, 2015) and potentially rural people work in the field of food production.<sup>33</sup> Farming skills can also ensure that a household becomes food secure if they produce their own food. However, this requires the farmers to have their own land and resources and access to credit (as capital).

One of the major challenges towards food insecurity in Bangladesh is the uneven distribution of land. A majority of the farmers don't own any land or don't have enough land to produce the food needed to feed the entire family. *"Access to land is inequitable. In rural areas 89% of landowners own less than 1 hectare and thirty-nine percent have less than 0.2 hectare. The number of landless households is growing"* (Land governance for equitable and sustainable development, 2014, p. 7). The uneven private owned land distribution is the major agrarian challenge in rural Bangladesh (Hossain, 1989, Islam and Omori, 2004) and is an outcome of changes in land-holding, land transaction and land policies of the country (Akanda and Ito, 2008). The policies related to land reform have gone through modification several times after independence but haven't made any significant changes in overall land ownership. Therefore, most farmers with a small subsistence plot or no piece of land at all depend on the market or government hand-outs to meet their food requirements. Moreover, because of owning a small piece of land or being landless they work on farms earning a miniscule income, barely enough for survival. Due to this income inadequacy, a large number of farmers migrate to the nearest city or the capital searching for employment opportunities.

Bangladeshi labour has gone through quite dramatic changes in terms of unemployment and job type. The agricultural sector dominated in formal economy of the country in 1970s. The contribution of agriculture in GDP of the country was 50 per cent in 1970 and declined to around 18 per cent in the twenty first century (Lewis, 2011, p. 137). More specifically, *"in fiscal year(FY) 2009-10, the share of agriculture in GDP was 20.29 percent, whereas in FY2010-11, FY2011-12 and FY2012-13 the share was 20.01 percent, 19.42 percent and 18.70 percent respectively"* (Unnayan Onneshan, 2014, p.4). The practice of agriculture, as a major occupation for the population gradually changed due to inadequate income in farming, unequal land distribution and also the lack of export opportunities. Massive urban migration and changes due to low earnings can be associated to the decline of agriculture as a major contributor to the GDP (Ahmed and Ehsan, 2005).

Another reason which hampers the accessibility towards food is the rise of grain prices. It depends on the food policies of the government, food production and import. After 1990 the government allowed private grain import which helped

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<sup>33</sup> According to the Ministry of Agriculture Bangladesh the total household number is 28.7 million families with 15.2 households employed in farming. Based on this data the percentage was calculated (Ministry of Agriculture Bangladesh, 2015).

stabilise the price of food grain by meeting the shortfall in food production. To cope with price increases the poor need an increase in income which depends on opportunities of employment. For the same reason, public procurement and distribution was strengthened by the SSNs to make food available in low price. However, this situation was adversely disrupted by the 2007-2008 global food crises which occasioned huge grain import bills and price instabilities in the domestic grain market.

In addition Bangladesh has been identified as one of the most vulnerable countries to the adverse effects of climate change (Khandaker and Mahmud, 2012). Food prices fluctuate due to fluctuating harvests brought about by natural calamities such as flooding, drought and cyclone. Since rice is the staple food, success in agricultural yields for consumption purposes highly depends on it. Rice is harvested three times per year. The three types of rice are Boro, Aus and Aman. The first category is planted in December-January and harvested in April-May the second one is planted in March-April and harvested in June-July while the other planted in July-August is harvested in November-December.

During the monsoon, flooding occurs and in many cases reduces crop production. Statistics show the flooding in 1988 reduced the production of crops by 40 per cent (Karim et al., 1996). The flooding period hampers the harvesting of the ‘Aus’ and plantation of ‘Aman’ which reduces the overall rice production. On the other hand, the North West regions are highly vulnerable to drought which affects the ‘Aus’ production (FAO, 2007). Rainfall shortage causes drought and reduces the yield of Aman rice affecting the production of Boro rice, wheat, pulses and potato production (FAO, 2007, p. 14). The geographical location of the country exposes it to devastating cyclones which come in between the month of May to November and destroys food plantations.

## **FOOD SECURITY AND POLICY TREND**

Policies supposed to guarantee food security are heavily dependent on changes in the international and domestic societal, financial and trade arenas. According to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) the main assets of the poor is their labour while there are several challenges to employment such as lack of appropriate skills and education which hampers their possibilities of moving into profitable activities

and restricts their upward social mobility (General Economic Division, 2005).<sup>34</sup> The National strategy for accelerated poverty reduction II (NSAPR II) has given a strong emphasis on SSN to protect the poor and reduce national poverty while food security has been identified as a core issue in the struggle against poverty (General Economic Division, 2012). Therefore, the government has identified SSNs as vehicles for ensuring food security.

Safety nets in developing countries normally operate through public or external funding. Usually these programmes depend on the political decisions of the government. They are not designed as comprehensive programmes and don't need extensive organisational structure. But there are in many cases dangers of duplication and limited coverage. The externally funded operations have some limitations as they create uncertainty about the future of the programme (Vivian, 1994, p. 9).

At present there are seven food security ensuring SSNs (will be discussed in the next section) which are operated from mainly the Ministry of (1) Health and Family Welfare (2) Disaster Management and (3) Women and Child Affairs. Parallel to government programmes, non-governmental organisations (such as Grameen Bank, BRAC, PROSHIKA and more) are organising these types of programmes. The government is spending almost 0.68 per cent of GDP (Ministry of Finance, 2013) from public funds for food security ensuring safety net programmes. The major spending on SSNs is implemented through government channels while some NGOs play a supportive role. The World Bank, World Food Programme and other agencies also contribute towards the SSNs through NGOs and also support ministries with various types of projects.

## **ENHANCING CAPABILITIES AMONG THE POOR: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME**

The conceptual framework for understanding the efficiency mechanism of safety net programme operation outlines the representation of two core concepts: food security and SSN.

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<sup>34</sup> "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) are prepared by the member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as development partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Updated every three years with annual progress reports, PRSPs describe the country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes over a three year or longer horizon to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated financing needs and major sources of financing". (IMF, 21 April, 2014)

Food security can be identified as an interdisciplinary concept which is highly linked with several economic, political and social issues (Scanlan, 2003, p.88). During the 1970s the focus on food security was on the reliability of aggregate food supply. The focus incorporated the importance of access to food, vulnerability and entitlement in the 1980s. Afterwards, the issue of nutrition planning, rural development, gender discrimination in food distribution and even environmental sustainability was accommodated (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.6). These wide ranges of issues linked with the food security concept make it a powerful tool for conceptualisation and analysis. Important definitions have been developed to date but all agree on the common characteristics that “*food security is secure access at all times to sufficient food*” (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.8). Therefore, the four basic concepts (1) sufficient food, (2) access of food, (3) security and (4) all time were incorporated in the notion.

Uvin (1994) elaborated that food security is concerned with food shortage, poverty and deprivation which expanded the concept towards food supply, economic issues and other issues relating inequality (gender, rural urban differences, culture). Therefore, food security is embedded with poverty, inequality and policy which make it very much important to be considered and analysed as a development issue.

During the World Bank conditionalities of the structural adjustment period SSNs were mainly short term operations aimed at rescuing the poor from various adverse shocks. But the official definition of SSNs were provided by World Bank in their World Development Report (1990) as “*Some form of income insurance to help people through short term stress and calamities*” (World Bank, 1990, p.90). This definition was an indication of SSNs being short term income support for those who are potentially able of supporting themselves although it has been unable to do so. Later, during the era of PRSP the objective of SSNs incorporated social protection for developing countries. Therefore, SSNs were converted towards the programme of social protection and promotion and became both short and long term interventions (Zohir et al, 2010, p.4). Hence, this strategy received appreciation from different angles. The World Bank (2008c) argued that SSNs played a preventive role in poverty and inequality by helping households to maintain access to food, health care, education and maintaining social equilibrium. Samson et al (2006) argued that SSNs increase food consumption by reducing hunger as households receiving support increase their expenditure on food. Vivian pointed that “*it seems reasonable to assume that the effects of social funds on poverty, and even on inequality, are positive, as far as they go — at least to the extent that they imply limited financial and institutional opportunity costs. Whether they go far enough to justify the programme, and whether better alternatives are available, needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis*” (Vivian, 1994, p.19)

This contribution will attempt to give a better understanding of the role of SSN in securing food for the poor the following section introduces the capability approach

(CA) of Sen (1992) to assess the efficiency and challenges of these programmes. CA conceptualises welfare as standard of living and measures *functioning* (being healthy, well-nourished, free movement, well-sheltered) (Kuklys, 2005). The approach rests on the basic concepts of *capability*, *functioning* and *freedom*.

The *functioning* of an individual is defined as an achievement. According to this approach *functioning's* are “*various things a person may value doing or being*” (Alkire, 2002, p. 5). This indicates that, assessing a social adjustment programme should focus on the *functioning* (doing or being) of programme participants (the poor). *Functioning* in CA is an output which identifies the well-being of people. Sen illustrates *functioning* as “*being adequate nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality etc., to much more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in community, and so on*” (Sen, 1992, p. 39). According to this approach *functioning's* are “*various things a person may value doing or being*” (Alkire, 2012, p25) and hence the *functioning* of an individual is viewed as an achievement. The concept of *functioning* is closely related to *capabilities* and *freedom* where *capabilities* are considered as a set of vectors for *functioning* which gives people *freedom* to select the living option that they value. For example as ‘budget set’ gives people *freedom* in the commodity space to buy the commodities they value, similarly *capability* set in the *functioning* space gives *freedom* to people to select their valuable living options (Sen, 1992, p.40). As *functioning* is a constituent of well-being, the *capabilities* represents the *freedom* of people to achieve well-being (Sen, 1992, p.49). CA considers *freedom* as an essential element which is ensured by *capabilities*.

Therefore, *functioning* of the poor after receiving support from an SSN can be a component of assessing the impact of an SSN. To be more clear, by answering the question ‘Is the programme supporting the poor towards ‘being food secure’ or ‘being capable of generating income?’ will point towards the *functioning* of the programme members. Focusing on the *functioning* of the poor participating in a SSN will help to find out how the programme is operating towards developing the *capabilities* (set of *functioning's*) of the programme participants.

*Freedom* in Sen’s approach indicates the real opportunities a person receives to accomplish what he or she values. This means what a person will choose rather than what he or she gets. It reflects the person’s freedom of choosing what types of opportunities he or she wants (Sen, 1992). In the context of this paper freedom is defined as ‘freedom of the programme participants’ whether they have the freedom of choosing their valued options?

This study rests on the assumption that not only government implementation and distribution but also the capability of utilizing the benefits are important for a policy

to be sustainable and effective. Therefore, attempts are made to identify the ingredients required for rethinking safety net policies in the context of Bangladesh.

## OVERVIEW OF SAFETY NETS IN BANGLADESH

To address poverty and food security the government has initiated anti-poverty strategies in the name of SSN for the targeted population. Bangladesh has a robust portfolio of SSN which address various forms of shocks and vulnerabilities and attempts to reduce poverty through direct transfer of resources to the poor.

Social protection as safety nets began in the mid 1970's. From that period safety nets have undergone functional changes in their administrative structure and implementation mechanisms. During the last two decades, the government has been pursuing a number of safety nets in different ways. Safety nets have been categorised as social protection and social empowerment programmes (website of Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Social protection programmes include allowances for old aged people, widows, distressed and destitute women, financially insolvent disable, maternity allowance for poor lactating mother, insolvent freedom fighters, injured freedom fighters, non-Bengali rehabilitation, and so on. There is a specific category named “*food security ensuring social protection programme*” which incorporates seven SSNs as mentioned earlier.

Social empowerment programmes include the microcredit programmes, support and rehabilitation programmes as housing support, agricultural rehabilitation, stipends and grants for disable students (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

However, this study contributes to the food security aspect hence it focuses on the modalities and limitations of seven safety net programmes targeting food security. The programmes are discussed in the section below.

*Food for Work (FFW)* is mainly an infrastructure building programme which provides food to the workers. The infrastructure building includes construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, river embankment to protect the poor from seasonal floods and irrigation channels (Ahmed et al, 1995, p. 46). It is an infrastructure building and employment creating safety nets to provide relief and create food wage employment in the slack season as well as do some infrastructure building and maintenance. It started its operations in 1975 – shortly after the 1974 famine. At first the programme was dependent on externally donated food grains from donor agencies. The main objectives were to secure the poor and undernourished with food. Gradually this objective shifted towards building and maintaining infrastructure for improved performance in the agricultural sector, act as relief operation in the time of natural disaster and generate productive seasonal



employment (Akhter et al, 1995). According to Khuda (2011, p. 94) *“benefits of the project include improved agricultural production; enhanced marketing opportunities, resulting from road construction and rehabilitation; improved transportation and communication; and reduced physical damages and loss of human lives, resulting from structures which hold back floods. Over the long run, these benefits represent development gains, with the potential to accelerate the pace of economic growth and contribute to food security, both at the household and national levels”*. Moreover, the programme provides the rural poor with employment during slack seasons since rural employment opportunities decrease at this time of the year. The food grain which is provided as wage payment is wheat. The concept of providing food rather than cash came as an objective of stabilizing the food price and providing the poor with food in order to improve their consumption and nutritional status (Ahmed et al, 1995, p.46).

*Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)* started running from 1974 with assistance from United Nations and World Food Programme (WFP) as a relief operation but steadily shifted to improving the livelihood of the targeted poor women headed households. It is one of the largest safety net programmes in the country. The programme provides a monthly food ration for two years combined with income generation and life skills training including personal saving programmes and access to micro-financing or NGO membership (Akhter, 2010 p. 9). The programme has distinctive operational mechanisms aimed at eradicating poverty among the vulnerable. Furthermore the programme targets only the poor female headed households who are assumed the most vulnerable segment of the population. The selection characteristics of VGD are women who are heads of the households where there is no male adult income earner in the family having a poor housing condition, are either poor, divorced, separated or having a disabled husband, owns less than 0.2 hectares of land, doesn't have a regular source of earning and often skip their meals due to food insufficiency. Priority is given to women who are physically fit and have the ability and interest to work in groups (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, p. 4). The women are only eligible to enroll once in the programme. Additionally, women included in other SSNs are not eligible of being VGD members (Khuda, 2011, p.97-98).

*Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Test Relief (TR) and Gratuitous Relief (GR)*: These three programmes are basically relief operations which are applied after the occurrence of natural disasters like floods and cyclones. These programme operations don't have any pre-set criterion and are aimed at mitigating the consequences of shocks (Akhter et al, 2010, p. 10).

The open Market sale (OMS) started operating in the early 80's and the present operation was initiated in the 2008 after the sharp price hike to tackle the food security situation by a seasonal rice distribution in a subsidised price. This seasonal sale targets the vulnerable geographical locations for a specific time. The

programme beneficiaries are the unemployed and ultra-poor workers of the vulnerable region. Therefore the objective is to curb the seasonal price hike. During the time of price hike of food grain this operation is run by the government which provides food grain at a subsidised price. The OMS has the objective of increasing the purchasing power of the ultra-poor and stabilizing the price in the market of a certain food grain. This operation provides 3.5 kg rice per person for 30 days.

Food Assistance in Chittagong Hill Tracts Area (FACHT): This area is situated in the eastern part of the country is a food insecure area due to the lack of availability of cultivable land and a past political conflict. The food insecurity situation deteriorated due to bamboo flowering in 2008. The flowering of a specific species of bamboo occurred (which normally happens after every fifty years). It allowed rats to eat the bamboo shoots giving them a food source leading to a drastic rise in the reproduction rate of the rats. These rats ate the crops and vegetables and this subsequently led to a severe food crisis. A relief operation went on with food assistance and cash transfer towards the poor (European Commission, 2012).

## **CRITICAL VIEWS ON FOOD SECURITY SAFETY NETS IN BANGLADESH**

The implementation and operation procedure of the SSN's has been changed, rearranged or modified due to necessity over different periods i.e. in response to the famine in 1974, during the 1988 and 1998 flood period, due to political movement in 1990 when the country moved towards a new paradigm of democratic aspiration and geographical targeting in the 'Monga' regions in the late 2000s.<sup>35</sup> A good example is during the famine in 1974 where the experimental micro-credit programmes were reduced and the Food for work (FFW) was scaled up for employment generation, supply of food and development of infrastructure (building roads, highways, bridge etc.) for better communication or transport. Similar incidents occurred during the flooding in 1987 and 1988 due to the need of an all-weather infrastructure when the government increased FFW programmes significantly. The women empowerment programmes were introduced in the 1990's targeting elderly and vulnerable women. In the late 2000 there was a prominent focus on geographical targeting (the Monga regions) (Rahman and Choudhury,

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<sup>35</sup> 'Monga' is a yearly cyclical phenomenon of hunger in local Bangla term meaning a famine like situation. It occurs during the month of September to November. The income as well as employment opportunity decreases at this period as it's the time between transplantation and harvest of paddy (Zug, 2006, Muhammad 2006).

2012). Furthermore, the structural changes and rearrangement of the SSNs are done in accordance to the ruling government's development agendas.<sup>36</sup>

Food security programmes as VGF, TR, GR and food assistance in Chittagong hill tracts incorporate provision of protecting the vulnerable after immediate shocks by providing them with food, which is necessary in the disaster situation. OMS and FFW are seasonal operations which help the vulnerable with food and employment. The six programmes mentioned above are short term operations under protecting nature. Therefore they are ensuring the vulnerable with food/employment for a specific/short term. On the other hand, VGD programmes are operated for a longer period (two years) and include skill development packages with the purpose to develop their capacity to face the shocks and become food secure. Evidence shows that food assistance programmes increase food consumption compared to cash transferred programmes (Ninno and Dorosh, 2003). Moreover, these types of programmes increase the demand of a specific food item (rice/ wheat - the food item which is distributed) and has a significant impact on reducing the market price (Ninno and Dorosh, 2003).

However, while there has been significant progress registered in SSNs, there have also been critical voices and different opinions about the value of the SSNs. Criticisms on the on-going programmes in Bangladesh point fingers to the effectiveness of cash and food providing programmes. The operation mechanisms have also faced criticisms.

The targeting/selection procedure is the most important point of the critics (Khuda 2011, Akhter, 2010, Ninno, 2000). Ninno (2000) showed that there were problems in selection of women in VGD programme. According to the findings *"People who are not poor and people who do not meet the selection criteria are sometimes selected. There are cases of people being selected because they related to the implementing officials. Some people had to pay a fee to be included in the programme. In such cases we can say that the selection process was not fair and objective"* (Ninno, 2000, p.10). Therefore the problems in selection indicated accommodating non-poor in the programme. Along with this, the age of VGD women has been another issue of criticism. *"The age of the participant appears to be a factor. Officials recognize the need for older women to receive assistance, yet the guidelines of the selection process do not encourage their selection as they are probably not able to participate in the training and may not benefit from it. In our sample we found 26 per cent of VGD women are over 50 years of age"* (Ninno, 2000,

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<sup>36</sup> Before election each political party of the country presents their election manifesto incorporating their development plans in front of the people and after being elected the ruling political party tries to fulfil these plans. Thus, the types of SSNs differ in different government regimes.

p.14-15). Even evidence of involvement of political leaders was visible in the women selection and distribution process. Furthermore, the study showed that 8 per cent of women bribed to become participants in the programme (Ninno, 2000, p.15). Further, with regard to grain distribution, the women only received 25 to 26 kg every month instead of 30 kg.

There are also critics from the programmes participating members. Three types of problems/mismanagement were identified by the women during VGD operation (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, Maniruzzaman, 2009 and Kabeer and Kabir, 2009). First was the, inclusion of non-targeted households (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, Maniruzzaman, 2009) in the programme.<sup>37</sup> Mannan and Ahmed (2012, p. 47) reported that almost 38.2 per cent of the women in their study reported that all of the selected women were not eligible according to the programme criteria.<sup>38</sup> Receiving less grain than predicted amounts (Kabeer and Kabir, 2009, p. 40) came as a second factor related to mismanagement. The third was the issue of bribing to become a member of VGD. Women reported that they had to pay bribes (cash) to be selected as a programme participant. The study of Mannan and Ahmed (2012, p. 48) also explored the issue of bribing. And, fourth, women participating in different SSNs were also included, against the programme criteria (Maniruzzaman, 2009, p. 23-24). The programme administration (Upazila Parishod representatives) confirmed the mismanagement in grain amount distribution and mentioned that they had to adjust and monitor the cost of transportation and labour wages (handling, weighing, loading and unloading) by selling a part of the provided grain (Maniruzzaman, 2009, p. 23-24).

Regarding the FFW programme Khuda (2011, p.94 ) indicated *“Three types of leakages have been observed: (i) over-reporting of work done (ii) practice of leaving the earth uncarpeted, thereby making it difficult to measure the actual volume of earthwork and the amount of work completed and (iii) under-payment to workers. Overall, leakage of resources is around one-third”*.<sup>39</sup> Akhter et al (1995,

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<sup>37</sup> All women were not selected according to the programme criteria. The programme specified criteria for selecting the programme participants as- *“women from landless households or households owning less than 15 decimals (0.15acre) of land, women with irregular income (less than Taka 300 per capita per month) or no household income, women who are daily or casual labourers, and women from households lacking ownership of productive assets, be selected. Additionally, preference is given to female headed-households (widowed, divorced, separated, deserted women or women with disabled husbands)”*. (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, p. 4)

<sup>38</sup> Mannan and Ahmed (2012) conducted a study based on 420 beneficiaries and 196 non beneficiaries for assessing the impact of VGD programme.

<sup>39</sup> The term ‘leakage’ indicates mismanagement in programme operation.

p.57-58) elaborated these leakages. They argued “*FFW engages mostly in the reconstruction or rehabilitation of existing structures. Hence, underestimation of the condition of structures before work has begun and overestimation of the work performed can lead to a large amount of leakage*” (Akhter et al, 1995, p.58). Moreover, 17 to 27 percent of workers were underpaid. There was mismanagement in the wheat amount that found its way to the project site which was less than actual amount (Akhter et al, 1995, p.58).

The VGF, TR and GR programmes are mainly relief programmes for those affected by natural disaster (normally flood affected). Problems in targeting were also evident in the VGF, TR and GR programmes. There were even participating members included in the programme who were not affected by any climatic disaster. The study of Ninno and Dorosh (2002) indicated that there were about 20 per cent members included in the programme who were not affected by any natural disaster.

The case study of Ninno et al (2001) on the role of VGF and FFW during 1998 flood in Bangladesh indicated that “*Donors responded to the flood situation with major increases in food aid. These eventually permitted a major expansion of targeted food grain distribution through the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Food for Work (FFW) programmes. However, almost inevitable delays and uncertainties in food aid arrivals resulted in only a small net increase in public distribution beyond pre-flood plans until December 1998 in part because existing government stocks of wheat were insufficient for a large expansion in distribution (Rice stocks were kept in reserve for possible use in stabilizing markets later). A policy of holding more stocks might not have been a better option, though, given substantial costs in procurement of grain, handling, and eventual distribution. With food grain supplies and prices stabilized by private sector imports, targeted cash transfers to supplement direct food transfers could have been used to increase household access to food (and other basic needs) without increasing market prices of food grain*” (Ninno et al, 2001, p.103).

Criticism on the OMS operation emanated from both administration and programme participants. The administering officers of the programme reported unavailability of officials appointed as monitors due to the vast nature of the programme and the few staff employed. The spots are located in distant locations making it difficult for officers to effectively deliver services (Zaman, 2011, p.74). The second problem regarded reduced amounts of rice reaching the spot leading to a conclusion that rice dealers sell the rice before it reaches the spot (Zaman, 2011). Based on programme participant’s opinion, almost 50 per cent complained that participants getting rice did not fulfil the criteria of the programme. Moreover 20 per cent reported that they received fewer amounts than committed. Almost 45 per cent of programme participant’s agreed that low quality rice was distributed in the programme (Zaman, 2011, p 85-87).

However, there is a dearth of literature based on the programme participant's opinion on the government's operation SSNs. Moreover, the study couldn't find any evidence whether the government is providing support according to the participant's choice or whether they have freedom to choose a programme according to their preference. It was visible that the FFW and OMS were open for all. FFW incorporates infrastructure building works which needs workers having the strength and mental will of doing heavy work. Therefore, poor having the will and strength of doing such jobs register in the programme. But there were evidence that in OMS a large portion of non-targeted people entered and bought rice.

## **ANALYSING SSN OPERATION CONCEPTUALLY AND THEORETICALLY**

This section will first link the two concepts (food security and SSN) and elaborate how SSNs can contribute towards securing food to the poor. Later, the operation of SSNs will be analysed theoretically based on Sen's CA.

The four pillars of food security (availability, access, utilisation and all time) can be addressed by SSN. Food availability is the supply of enough food to an individual, household or state which can be directly addressed by SSN. Asset transfer SSNs normally transfers land/seed/ fertiliser or livestock's. These can help in increasing the agricultural production or productivity. Public works programme (such as FFW) are basically infrastructure building programmes which provide food for the workers. These programmes can work towards making food available in two ways. First, the programme gives food support to the workers by providing food making them have access to food. On the other hand by creating employment opportunities and recruiting the poor it generates income in the household, increasing their purchasing capacity. Second, building roads or bridges improves rural urban communication which makes transportation easy and convenient and improves the access of food, seed, fertilised or other supporting materials in market. An open and high level of access of these factors creates competition among the distributors thereby helping in lowering prices and bringing a positive impact on food availability.

Food access targets the ability of producing or purchasing sufficient nutritious food. This area can be addressed by SSN. SSNs can work towards making food accessible by (1) direct transfer of food and (2) increasing household income by creating employment opportunities. The TR, GR and VGF programmes make a direct access to food. These programmes can ensure food to the vulnerable for a specific time period. Besides public food distribution SSNs such as OMS provides

food in a subsidised price which enables poor to get access towards food during price hike.

Food utilisation targets nutritional adequacy of foods eaten. This component of food security is a broad issue as it does not only depend on the nutritive value of a specific food but also can be improvised by refining supplementary areas such as, making pure drinking water available, developing hygienic awareness, advising child and health care practices, improving sanitation and so on. Awareness and advice on these issues can make a positive impact on health. It is clear that illness and diseases hamper utilisation by reducing absorption of nutrients. SSN integrated with training and awareness building component (such as VGD) can improve knowledge and practice in the mentioned areas which can in turn bring positive impact on utilisation of nutrients in food.

Finally, the last pillar - sustainability or all time is concerned with crisis prevention and risk management. Almost all SSNs are protective mechanisms of risk management for sudden shocks. Furthermore, SSNs such as VGD which helps the poor to develop savings can build the ability of the programme participants from entering sudden shock or crisis.

A number of benefits of SSN towards ensuring food to poor can be elaborated. But, the question of SSN planning and operation is a major point towards ensuring these positive impacts. The statement of Vivian (1994) can be quoted in this regard *“The trend toward institutionalizing the safety net approach is an important one, because it means that these programmes must now be assessed on an entirely new basis: when safety nets are short-term emergency measures, strictly complementary to existing social programmes, and especially when they do not represent significant opportunity costs, whatever benefits they can provide are welcome extras. When, however, the safety net approach becomes incorporated into long-term development strategy, and provides a model for alternative forms of social service provisioning, it becomes imperative to assess its long-term social impacts more carefully”*(Vivian, 1994, p.15-16).

According to this statement if the food security social protection SSNs of Bangladesh are analysed, it is evident that TR, GR, VGF, OMS and FFCHT are short term emergency operations implemented in special/emergency need situation. There is no doubt that these SSNs contribute by protecting the poor during crisis moments (normally when they are affected by natural calamities, food price hike and so on). But the other two SSNs the VGD and FFW are permanent programmes with an objective of ensuring food security. The first one provides food for 24 months and the second one makes poor accessible to food by employment creation. Both of these two programmes started after the famine of 1974. The main objective of FFW is to generate income for poor in slack seasons when employment opportunities reduce. As the programme provides food instead of cash, it is

assumed that this mechanism helps to stabilise the food grain price and improve food consumption of the participating poor (Ahmed et al, 1995, p.46). Moreover, there is an impact on *“agricultural sector through the construction and maintenance of infrastructure for production and marketing”* (Ahmed et al, 1995, p. 49). As the programme participants are self-targeted, the poor willing to work and having the physical ability of hard working join the programme.<sup>40</sup> *“FFW work has a long a positive effect on output, a negative effect on input prices and a positive effect on the adaptation of improved technologies that leads to new employment generation”* (Islam, 2007, p.117). FFW programmes are held from the month of January to May (Ahmed et al, 1995, p. 49).

Poor people need employment and income generation during slack periods when there is a lack of employment. Rice is the main crop in the agricultural sector and among the three main rice crops (*Boro, Aus* and *Aman*), *Boro* is planted in December January and harvested in April to May. Therefore, April- May are harvest seasons coinciding with the FFW programmes. The impact of this seasonal overlapping can be reduced by operating the programme in small slots rather than a long 5 month slot (January to May). For example, the programme can be operated in two slots: from January to March and September- October. These are the periods when there is no planting or harvesting of the major crop (rice). FFW started with an aim of providing employment to poor people during the agricultural slack seasons. However, there has been a rapid expansion of *Boro* rice and wheat in recent years which has increased agricultural employment opportunities during the periods which was considered as slack season previously (Islam, 2011, p.116).

In addition to FFW, VGD is also a long term operation. In fact it is the longest and largest (considering the coverage) food security ensuring SSN programme of the country with both livelihood protection and promotion objectives. VGD has a list of criticisms regarding its operating mechanism including inappropriate targeting, bribing to be included and receiving less amounts of food grain than committed. Targeting is an important issue as the programme objectives can be diverted from its predicted effects if targeted populations are not included in the programme. Therefore, this area should be handled with proper care. Furthermore, the corruption issues also need to be addressed if the poor needs to pay bribes to become members of VGD then the main objective of social protection become questionable.

Safety nets can be a mechanism of ensuring food security to the poor if they can address the major challenges. To ensure food security the poor need access to food.

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<sup>40</sup> FFW programme contains hard physical work and normally provides wheat as the wage. Wheat is treated as an inferior good in rural areas and those who are in need of food or earning, joins this programme (Islam, 2011, p.116).



It has been discussed earlier that the poor spend three quarter of their earnings on food consumption. The country is sufficiently producing its staple food, rice, and also importing adequate amounts of wheat from US, Canada, India, Australia, Russia and Ukraine (Hossain and Lagos, 2014, p.9). There are also huge opportunities of fish cultivation in the country. It seems therefore that enough food is available for securing basic the consumption of the population. Availability is off course an important and essential component of ensuring food security of the poor. But the question raised here is whether the people have access to food or not?

Amartya Sen (1981) showed that availability of food cannot secure the poor with food it is the policies that control the situation. When accessibility is combined with availability, the poor can reach it. The accessibility is lessened mainly for two reasons: (1) low purchasing power and (2) shocks. Poor do not have adequate purchasing power to ensure food in Bangladesh due to not having enough assets or employment for earning.

Assessing SSNs activities on ensuring food security based on the theoretical frame of CA the components for analysis are *capability*, *functioning* and *freedom*. *Functioning* is considered as outputs which can be achieved by *capabilities* and *freedom*. Therefore, the *functioning* of poor after participating in SSNs can be a measure of assessing the programmes. For example based on this paper a valuable *functioning* can be described as, poor being food secure after completing the programme. Food security is a complex identity which constitutes four pillars. Among these four pillars, all *time* or sustainability is a necessary component. So, making poor secure with food for a specific time period is not making them food secure. The study findings show that short term SSN's (TR, GR and food assistance in Chittagong Hill Tracts) helps poor to have food for a specific time period. OMS also allows poor to get low priced food grain which increases their access towards food. In a nutshell, these programmes provide a breathing space for the programme participants when they fall in crisis. There is no doubt that these opportunities are helping the poor to access food temporarily, during several crisis periods. Theoretically, these short term programmes are enabling this group towards the *function* of being accessible to food for a specific time which is not an indication of food security as it does not ensure food availability and accessibility all time. Therefore, there should be some steps to make poor sustainably accessible towards food.

The point which may arise here is that the short term programmes (as TR, GR, OMS and FFCHT) are relief operations for saving the vulnerable in shock situation and they do not have the objective of livelihood promotion. In agreement with this statement this study has concentrated on the other two SSNs. According to Ahmed (1995, p.48) "*poverty reduction depends on increasing the economy's capacity for absorbing the existing labor force and on the prospect for increasing the productivity of wage and self-employed labor*". Hence FFW and VGD can take part

in this regard. While FFW can create employment opportunities VGD can assist women by its skill development training. Furthermore, the created savings and the opportunity of being enrolled in a micro-financing programme in VGD can help women to enhance their potential capacities as small entrepreneurs. But all these positive impacts depend on the proper implementation of these programmes. Women becoming small entrepreneurs can indicate their valuable *functioning* and a step ahead towards sustainable food access.

According to CA, valuable *functioning* is based on capabilities and freedom. Theoretically the SSNs should provide opportunities to provide women freedom to have what they prefer, rather than what they get. Under this consideration the savings or access to micro-financing institutions created by VGD may offer women the freedom to choose their preferred income generating activity and may work as a livelihood promotional programme as well as a social protection programme. However, these considerations are depending on a more transparent and efficient approach towards implementation.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This contribution aimed to explore important issues of ensuring food security of poor by means of SSNs. Hence, the study focused on food security targeted SSN programmes of Bangladesh and encapsulated the main problems involved and accommodated new insights in the field. The objective of the paper was to find out (1) what are the major challenges in achieving food security? (2) What type of SSN's are presently operated in the country with an aim of ensuring food security? (3) What are the initial reactions of the poor? And finally, what ingredients can be accommodated in the mechanisms to make the vulnerable sustainably food secure?

The first research question was addressed by analysing existing literatures. Due to uneven distribution of land farmers don't have their own land or have less than sufficient land to feed the family. For increasing earnings these farmers are migrating to the city. The natural calamities, river erosion and other disasters are other reasons leading the rural poor to migrate and seek employment (Alam and Khuda 2005, 2009, 2011). At present there are almost 20 million urban poor and if this situation continues it may increase to 30 million by 2015 (Danida, 2012). The present national poverty level is 31.5 per cent but almost 25 per cent of the population being above the poverty line is vulnerable of falling down to poverty by sudden shocks. Moreover, political instability and labour unrest are also depressing features in the country hampering economic growth. In this way, employment creation and an effective land reform should be an essential tool for poverty reduction. An employed population with access to land can be an asset for a low income and densely populated country like Bangladesh.

Safety nets can work for both protection and promotion where protection seeks to prevent a decline in living standards and promotion targets to eliminate deprivation (Matin and Hulme, 2003, p.650). Combining these two components enables these strategies to ensure food security. The nature of protection can act as a mechanism of preventing hunger and starvation whereas promotion can eliminate deprivation by an income raise (Dreze and Sen, 1989, p.60-61). Therefore, SSNs with both protective and promotive nature can ensure food security by making food available and accessible for all time. The aims of SSNs in Bangladesh are poverty reduction programmes targeted towards chronic and transient poor to help them cope with sudden shocks. At present, there are seven SSNs in the country (analysed in this study) operated with an aim of ensuring food security. Most of them are of a protective nature where two (FFW and VGD) has the nature of both protection and promotion.

Exploring the planning and operation of these SSN programmes indicates differences between planning and implementation. It does not always work as it is planned and there are implementation gaps in operation. The planning of SSN containing both a protection and promotion nature indicates that it does not operate as it is planned in the field (criticism of FFW and VGD). Literature on implementation gaps point to the reality that these types of gaps in programme planning and operation are often pronounced in developing countries (Matin and Hulme, 2003, p.650). Considering operational gaps in SSNs, Bangladesh Rural Advancement committee (BRAC) designed and implemented a programme Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) by accommodating asset transfer, health care and social development training in the programme criteria in 2002 (mentioned in details in chapter 1 and chapter 7). In addition to asset support the programme's training was mainly to develop capabilities of the poor and enabling them to establish their own income generating activity. Several studies indicated a significant improvement in livelihood of poor people participating in this programme (Matin and walker, 2004, Haseen, 2006, Rabbani et al, 2006). Therefore, developing capabilities for creating their own micro enterprises or cooperatives may be an option for increasing the household income and making the poor food secure. Introducing the opportunity of entering capital building schemes after the programme completion, may open the pathway towards being food secure or being capable of generating their own income. These types of programmes with effective training can bring out a person's capabilities and develop them as self-entrepreneurs (Mahmuda et al, 2014).



# **CHAPTER 5. WOMEN, FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIO ECONOMIC FACTORS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM VGD MEMBERS OF BANGLADESH<sup>41</sup>**

## **ABSTRACT**

Social safety nets (SSN) in developing countries are planned and operated with an aim to reduce poverty and ensure food security of deprived population. The vulnerable group development programme (VGD) of Bangladesh is an example of SSN consisting both protection and promotional mechanism. Based on a quantitative study on the VGD programme participating women this article examines the impact of VGD ensuring food security among targeted population and explores the socio economic factors affecting food security.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of food security (FS) has passed various transformations during its conceptual evolution.<sup>42</sup> The most significant transformation came with the definition conceptualisation FS as supply of food and emphasizing the access of food by households and individuals (Carr, 2006, Maxwell and Smith, 1992). Later, the focus was expanded by including sustainability and nutrient utilisation in FS concept. These paradigm shifts indicated coexistence of various issues in the idea as economic access, livelihood security, nutritional adaptation, education and knowledge, culture and perception. Therefore, the wide ranging character of FS introduces and interlinks the notions of poverty, malnourishment and vulnerability in the definition of FS and places it as an important development concern.

The rising criticism of structural adjustment programmes in development discussion gave rise to the new approach under the comprehensive development framework (CDF) and introduced poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) as a development

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<sup>41</sup> This paper was written with coauthors, Shamima Nasrin, Md Aslam Mia and Baskaran Angathevar and has been submitted in *Food Policy*, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> For various definitions of food security please see Maxwell and Smith(1992), p.138-191

strategy for developing countries during the late 1990s (Rahman, 2012). At this stage, developing countries like Bangladesh incorporated social safety nets (SSNs) in their PRSP as an instrument of social protection to address poverty and vulnerability. Looking back, SSN operations in Bangladesh were introduced since 1974 but not as development programmes. They were mainly targeted towards relief operations during climatic disaster or seasonal hunger periods. Thus, PRSP introduced the work of SSNs as programmes contributing in development policies by reallocating income to the poor and vulnerable with an objective of empowering, assisting to cope with crises and improving their future investment capacity (The World Bank, 2008c). SSNs in Bangladesh are both government and donor funded operations. The donor funded SSNs are most commonly implemented by non-government organisations (NGOs).

Considering FS as a major obstacle of development in Bangladesh, the government introduced SSNs specially targeted to ensure FS. Among all, the vulnerable group development programme (VGD) is the largest and longest SSN. The overall aim of the programme is to ensure FS of the vulnerable.<sup>43, 44</sup> The programme provides specific resources for those vulnerable to FS.<sup>45</sup> Along with its protective

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<sup>43</sup> Presently (from year 2013) VGD covers 64.72 hundred thousand deprived women of the country (Ministry of Finance, 2015)

<sup>44</sup> According to VGD criteria vulnerable are selected based on (a) Women who are head of the households where there is no adult income earner male in the family- The programme gives preference to women who are widow, divorced, and separated or women with disable husband.

(b) Households having no land ownership or own less than 15 decimals of land.

(c) Doesn't have a regular source of earning- The normal criteria is to select households which earn less than BDT 300 (USD 38 ) per month from daily or casual labour.

(d) Members of the house often skip their meals due to food insufficiency- Consumes less than two full meals per day.

(e) Poor housing condition regarding construction and sanitation facilities

(f) Who are not already members of other food and/or cash based programme or have been VGD participants at any time.

Priority is given to (1) Women who are physically fit and have the ability and interest to work in groups and (2) Have ability of developing their economic and social condition (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, p.5).

<sup>45</sup> The programme provides a monthly food ration (rice/wheat) for two years in combination with some development packages. The packages include income generating and life skill training consigned with a personal saving programme. The programme aware women about civil and legal rights, HIV awareness and knowledge on some measures of disaster preparation and coping. Also the programme intends to provide some income generating skill training activities and enroll the members in a cash saving scheme.

mechanism (by providing food) it also includes promotive mechanisms to empower this segment of population (providing skill development training to them). The programme participants are women who are considered vulnerable and deprived based on the programme selection criteria.

Several literatures address FS measurement as an important element of reflecting well-being (Smith and Subandoro, 2007, HIES, 2010, Coats et al, 2010, Kashem and Faroque, 2013). Targeting human well-being and development VGD also works aiming at poverty reduction and FS in Bangladesh. But most of the time, VGD's effectiveness are assessed by its impact on poverty reduction (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, Naomi, 2007, Pradhan and Sulaiman, 2014) rather than focusing on FS condition. Moreover, there are few mentioning SSNs impact on FS (Kabeer and Sulaiman, 2015, Raza et al, 2012, Haseen, 2007) among the studies focused on NGO operated programmes. Unfortunately, government SSNs supporting FS catch less attention (as there was only one impact assessment of VGD programme by the government).<sup>46</sup> The majority of this literature is qualitative in nature while only a few studies such as the study of Pradhan and Sulaiman (2014) was based on quantitative results. But still, Pradhan and Sulaiman's quantitative impact assessment on VGD was based on the protection and promotional effect focusing on poverty reduction where they used national data set. Therefore, a gap was observed in literature targeting the impact of VGD on FS of women based on primary data.

Considering the importance of VGDs impact on FS this study was designed to measure the FS status of VGD participating women and explore contributory socio-economic factors affecting FS. VGD was selected for this research as it is the largest FS ensuring social protection-food security ensuring programme of Bangladesh. The paper thus sets out to address the following questions (1) What is the present food security situation of women participating in VGD and (2) Which socio economic factors contribute towards food insecurity status?

This research contributes to knowledge by exploring the role of VGD on FS status of women in three ways first, it seeks to fill the gap in literature by adding the FS dimension in VGD effectiveness. Second, it explores the contributory socio-economic factors playing a vital role on FS of VGD participants. Third, it intends to provide an in-depth exploration of Sen's capability approach focusing on the *functioning and freedom* aspects of women indicating how social conversion factors cannot work effectively due to socio-economic barriers towards well-being. Furthermore, it provides policy implication for designing an improved food security social protection programme.

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<sup>46</sup> See Mannan and Ahmed (2012).

The article is organised as follows. The first part gives an overview of extant literature in the field of FS and the challenges of ensuring FS. Next it proceeds to the theoretical framework of the research. The research methodology, method and analysis explore empirical findings of the research. Finally the explanation and conclusion gives an empirical and theoretical understanding of the findings with policy suggestions.

## FOOD SECURITY AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS

Understanding the problem area will require a review of relevant literature discussed under three segments (1) The basic concepts of food security (2) Factors affecting food security and (3) Women and food security

### THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF FOOD SECURITY

The concept of food security (FS) officially emerged in the United Nations World Food Conference in 1974 but the root of this concept can be traced back to the 1972-74 world food crises and the recognition of the right to food as an element of adequate standard of living in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The UN world food conference described food security as “*The availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices*” (Datta, 2014, p. 24). This definition has been modified at several food conferences of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and four elements of food security emerged- availability, access, utilisation and stability (Datta, 2014, p. 25). Simon Maxwell, one of the pioneers in food security research has noted a simple but weighty definition of food security as “*Secure access to enough food all the time*” (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.4). This definition includes four basic concepts- sufficient food, access to food, security and all time.

‘Sufficiency’ can be recognised by adequate calorie needed for an active and healthy life. This issue has been described by authors in different literature as minimum level of food consumption by Reutlinger and Knapp (1980), enough by Maxwell and Smith (1992), target level by Siamwala and Valdes (1980), “*enough food to supply the energy needed for all family members to live healthy, active and productive lives*” by Sahn (1989) (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p. 8). The second concept ‘*access of food*’ can be identified as the power of producing, purchasing, exchanging or receiving food whereas ‘*security*’ covers the equilibrium among vulnerability, risk and insurance (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.4). The security perspective has also been defined as utilisation of food. Tweeten’s (1997) definition highlighted the concern of food utilisation along with the availability and access concept. Hence, utilisation refers to the nutritional adequacy where positive nutritional outcomes may come from better food utilisation which is related to



broader areas such as pure drinking water, hygienic child care practice, sanitation and health care (Freeland and Cherrier, 2012). Finally, food security will only be ensured when it is sustained for all time, which means people achieving the ability of coping and managing crisis.

## FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY

Adequate food supply may not help ensuring FS where numerous factors are present and prevent poor households or the vulnerable from accessing food. The preventive factors can be identified as: lack of purchasing power, inability of access to land for cultivation or access to credit for smooth consumption or lack of public assistance or social supportive programmes (Sen, 1981, 1995 in Mallick and Rafi, 2010, p.594). In addition, Maitro and Rao (2015) indicated education, gender and household composition as major drivers of FS in poor households.

Studies have been conducted to identify factors contributing to or preventing FS (Knueppel D et al, 2010, Olson C et al, 1996). The research of Knueppel (2010) on 237 households in rural Tanzania showed that household FS was positively associated with the educational level of the mother as well as the father, the wealth of the household and consumption meat and fish (animal source food). Research on rural upstate New York showed that the contributory factors related with food insecurity were identified as: single parenthood, absence of savings, large number of family members, unexpected expenses and low spending on food (Olson C et al, 1996). Evidence shows that employment status of the household members also affects FS as Ravi and Engler's (2014) study on that India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme showed a significant improvement in FS of the household.

Maxwell and Marisol (1992) in their conceptual review on household food security argued that FS is very closely related to poverty, undernourishment and vulnerability, seen also as a multidimensional issue. For instance malnutrition or undernourishment is a result of inadequate dietary intake, quality of diet and presence of diseases (Tomkins and Watson, 1989; Bryceson 1990, Commission of European Community, 1988). Poverty and vulnerability are linked with various development perspectives. Lack of income and assets to achieve the elementary needs, sense of inability and vulnerability to address shocks are well discussed issues on poverty for the past decades (World development report, 2001). Generally the poor are the ones who suffer most from famine, hunger and malnutrition (Hunger 1992). Nevertheless it is not necessary that deprived groups are always victims of hunger or malnutrition (Swift 1989, Bohle et al. 1991). In addition to income there are multiple factors associated for individuals as being vulnerable. Chambers (1989) defined vulnerability suggesting three basic coordinates: *“the risk of exposure to crisis, stress and shocks, the risk of inadequate capacities to cope*

*with stress, crisis and shocks and the risk of severe consequences of, and the attendant risks of slow or limited recovery (resiliency) from crises, risk and shock”* (Watts, M.J. 1993).

The factors related to the food security status of Bangladesh as identified by viewing regional variations were characterised by the World Food Programme (2013) and identified as the propensity of natural disasters, supply and quality of farming land, access to educational and health facilities, level of infrastructure expansion, occupation opportunities and dietary practices are the main factors affecting the situation (WFP, 2013). The behaviours related to food and the food insecurity was also found to be affected by the socio economic cultural factors. Poverty, gender discrimination, age, geographical location and cultural practices were the issues that affect the pattern of food consumption (World Food Programme, 2013).

## **WOMEN AND FOOD SECURITY**

Gender discrimination is a highly discussed issue in FS literature as it is believed that female headed households are more vulnerable and food insecure (Mallick and Rafi, 2010) as women’s experiences of malnutrition and food insecurity are higher compared to their male counterparts in developing countries (Suar 1994). One reason for this status is the household food distribution system where a pro-male bias exists in quantity and quality food intake (Haddad et al, 1996).

Secondly, women’s earning capacity is associated with FS as Barros et al argued, *“in female-headed households that are poor, the main reason for this lower income is not a lower number of earners per capita but the lower earning power of these earners. As women tend to earn less on average than do men, a household lacking male-earned income simply has a much higher probability of being poor”* (Barros et al, 1997, p.232). In most of the developing countries men earn more than females outside the house and even in same jobs and hence households having less male or earning male members increase the vulnerability of food insecurity. This low earning can be due to low skill of women in outdoor jobs and cultural restrictions which often prohibit women from participating in various food production activities as well as outdoor jobs in developing countries (Kabeer, 1991, p.1). Women are considered to be responsible for household works and high gender biases exist in the food production labour sectors of developing countries. Women account for almost 43 per cent of the agriculture labour in developing countries, but women’s role in agriculture and outdoor work in Bangladesh is unappreciated due to the social perception and cultural norms which value women’s seclusion and undervalue women’s labour (Kabeer, 1994).

Women’s economic contribution to household income has a positive impact on FS (Schmeer et al, 2015, p.9). This argument also supports the findings of Engle (1993)

where it argued that mothers contributing in household income achieve respect and power from the members of the household and even the children of these mothers have better nutritional status.

Women play a vital role in ensuring the food requirements of the family by being involved in the process of food production and preparation with inadequate resources in developing countries (Quisumbing et al, 1995). Various scholars indicate that FS of women can be improved by empowering them (Bestman, 1995, Handa, 1996, Rogers, 1996) through improving women's access to land, credit, employment and education (Okoli, 2001, p.52; Quisumbing et al, 1995).

## THEORETICAL FRAME

The study aims to explore the FS status of deprived women participating in VGD and find the socio-economic factors contributing or affecting FS. The research considers VGD as a resource and support provider with an aim of ensuring FS to the vulnerable women of the society. Taking this into consideration the research employs the capability approach (CA) of Sen as theoretical tool for a better understanding of how provided resources can help women to become food secure.

The capability approach (CA) developed by Amartya Sen can be defined as a critical response towards various approaches of well-being measurement, criticizing the 'information base' on which well-being is predicted. While welfare economics concentrates on income as the main information base for well-being, Sen (acknowledging income as an indicator) argues that income alone cannot directly ensure components of well-being such as being healthy, being food secure or being able to choose a job and so on ( Sen 1992, p.33). Thus, instead of focusing on means for facilitating a good life, the focus should go to the actual living which people can manage and achieve. He argues that to achieve a desirable life people need *freedom* to go for *functioning* (The valuable beings and doings) and the *capabilities* (opportunities or substantive freedom) that they can have for realizing these *functioning's* (Tao, 2013, p.3).

*Capability* is very closely related to the concept of *functioning*. It is considered as a 'set of vectors' of *functioning*.<sup>47</sup> For example a 'budget set' gives women *freedom* in the commodity space to buy the commodities she values, similarly capability set in the *functioning* space gives *freedom* to women to select their valuable living option (Sen, 1992, p.40). Therefore, *capability* is a reflection of women's *freedom* for achieving the *functioning's* they value. As *functioning* is a constituent of well-being, *capabilities* represents the *freedom* of a person to achieve well-being (Sen,

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<sup>47</sup> The *functioning's* are defined as an achievement. According to this approach *functioning's* are "various things a person may value doing or being" (Alkire, 2002, p. 5).

1992, p.49). CA considers *freedom* as an essential element which is ensured by *capabilities*.

Sen's capability approach introduces a bridge between capability and the ability to convert this capability into *functioning* (Sen, 1985). Goods or services in CA are considered as means to *functioning*. This relation of goods and *functioning* are influenced by conversion factors. According to Robeyns (2005, p. 98)

*“A good has certain characteristics, which makes it of interest to people. For example, we are not interested in a bicycle because it is an object made from certain materials with a specific shape and colour, but because it can take us to places where we want to go, and in a faster way than if we were walking. These characteristics of a good enable a functioning. In our example, the bicycle enables the functioning of mobility, to be able to move oneself freely and more rapidly than walking”.*

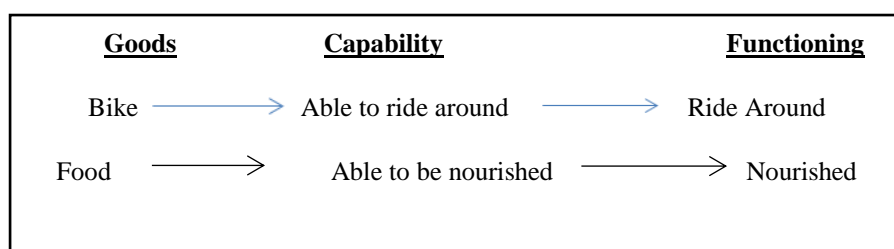


Figure 5.1 An example of goods, capabilities and functioning.

Source: Alkire, S, 2012, p. 27.

Therefore, the provided good and service (rice and skill development training) by VGD can be a means of *functioning*. Where goods are the provided resources and women ‘being food secure’ is the valued *functioning*.

The actors of *functioning* in this research are women, who belong in a similar socio economic and demographic background and are participating in the same VGD programme. They comprise their own capability set where freedom is considered as real opportunities. Achieving a food secure status or “being food secure” (in the word of CA) is the outcome or *functioning* considered in this research. It will explore the pathways towards this *functioning* by provided goods through their *capabilities*.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### The study area and data collection

The study area was a sub district (Upazilla) Shonargaon in Bangladesh. Data were collected from women participating in VGD programmes. A detail description of data collection has been described in chapter 3 (research methodology).

## METHODS

Being quantitative in nature the research employed IBM SPSS statistics 22 version for empirical analysis. The quantitative analysis explored the demographic characteristics and FS condition of the participating women by showing the descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included information on women's socio economic characteristics, sources of food, eating habit, decision-making pattern related to food (from buying to food cooking) and FS status. Furthermore, the empirical model highlights the relation between individual and household FS with associated factors (such as participants and their husband's education, household income, number of dependent family members, home ownership, sources of food and meal type).

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

### *Demographic characteristics*

All 300 questionnaires were successfully distributed among the respondent women. Table 5.1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the women participating in VGD. It shows that 70.7 percent respondents were married and almost all of them (99.3) belong to the same religion. Majority of the women (65%) did not have any education and the rest 35 percent only completed primary level of education Class 1 to 5).

Table 5. 1 Socio-economic characteristics of participants

Basic information	Group	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	212	70.7
	Un-married	2	0.7
	Divorced	17	5.7
	Widow	69	23
<b>Religion</b>	Islam	298	99.3
	Hinduism	2	0.7
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Bengali	300	100

<b>Education</b>	No-education	195	65
	Primary (up to class 5)	105	35
<b>Husbands education</b>	No education	193	64.3
	Primary (up to class 5)	103	34.3
	Secondary (class 6 to 10)	2	0.7
<b>Woman Occupation</b>	Day labour	80	26.7
	Domestic Maid	37	12.3
	Ready made Garments worker	107	35.5
	Begger	2	0.7
	Other	9	3
	Not employed	65	21.7
<b>Dependent member in the family (in number)</b>	1-2	146	48.7
	3-4	98	32.7
	5 and above	54	18
	No dependant member	2	0.7
<b>Toilet facility</b>	Hygienic	156	52
	Non hygienic	143	47.7
	Other	1	0.3

The calculation on their husband's education also provided a similar view where 64.3 per cent were non educated, 34.3 per cent completing primary and 0.7 per cent having a secondary education. Forty-eight per cent of the participants had 1 or 2 dependent members while 32.7 percent had 3 to 4 dependents in the family. Regarding the toilet conditions 52 per cent had hygienic toilet facility whereas 47.7 per cent had non-hygienic toilet.



Photo 5.1 Hygienic and non-hygienic toilet.<sup>48</sup>

### *Eating and cooking patterns*

Table 5.2 indicates 53 percent of the women taking Rice/Bread and Vegetable in a meal whereas 43.7 percent eat Rice/Bread, vegetable and fish/meat for a meal indicating that a significant proportion of people (43.7 percent) are able to manage a balanced diet. It also implies that the VGD programme enhance the ability of the participants to have a quality diet. Although 53 percent takes only Rice/Bread and Vegetable, the ability to have a balanced diet (Rice/bread+ vegetable +fish/meat) of 43.7 percent shows a positive change in food habits.



Photo 5.2 Kitchen, cleaning dishes with mud and a chicken potato curry.

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<sup>48</sup> All photos in this chapter have been taken by the author during data collection.

### ***Source of Food***

Majority of the respondents (97.3 percent) buy and produce food (vegetable) to meet the food demand of the family.<sup>49</sup>



Photo 5.3 Vegetable plants outside the house and in between source of drinking water (tube-well), toilet and kitchen

### ***Decision-making capacity of the participants at the household***

Table 5.2 indicates that although women are participants of VGD programme, they have little voice regarding buying food items for their daily needs. In most of the cases men (66.7 percent) take decisions over the purchasing of food items. This indicates that women have less decision-making power in these households. It also implies that income has not contributed much to increase women's empowerment in household decision-making. The frequency indicator also reveals that not only do men take decisions on purchasing food items by themselves but also take decisions about cooking, which indicates that men dominate the food related household decision-making. This finding therefore suggests low levels of decision-making power on the part of women at the household level.

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<sup>49</sup> Producing food here is basically small kitchen gardening of vegetables.



Table 5. 2 Socio-economic characteristics of participants

Indicators	Item	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Types of food</b>	Rice /Bread	10	3.3
	Rice/Bread + Vegetable	159	53
	Rice/Bread+ Vegetable+ Fish/meat	131	43.7
<b>Sources of food</b>	Produce	8	2.7
	Produce+ buy	292	97.3
<b>Decision maker<sup>50</sup></b>	Man	200	66.7
	Women	36	12
	Both	61	20.3
	Other	3	1
<b>Buyer<sup>51</sup></b>	Man	162	54
	Women	61	20.3
	Both	73	24.3
	Other	4	1.3
<b>Cooker</b>	Adult female	293	97.7
	adult male	2	.7
	Other	5	1.6

### *Food security*

Based on nine (mentioned in table 5.3) FS related questions the FS status of the women are presented in the following table

<sup>50</sup> The gender of the person who decide what to buy for their day to day meals

<sup>51</sup> The gender of the person who buys or produces the food items based on the decision made.

Table 5.3 Food Security of the participants

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
How often did you eat three 'square meals' (full stomach meals) a day in the past 12 months (not a festival day)?	Mostly (3 meals each day)	157	52.3
	Often (3 at least a few times each week)	69	23.0
	Sometimes (3 per day 7-12 times this year)	72	24.0
	Rarely (3 per day only 1-6 times this year)	2	0.7
	Never	0	0
In the last 12 months, how often did you or any of your family have to eat wheat (or another grain) although you wanted to eat rice (not including when you were sick)?	Never	196	65.3
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	57	19.0
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	47	15.7
	Often (a few times each month)	0	0
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	0	0
In the last 12 months how often did <i>you yourself</i> skip entire meals_due to scarcity of food?	Never	226	75.3
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	58	19.3
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	16	5.3
	Often (a few times each month)	0	0
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	0	0
In the past 12 months how often did <i>you personally</i> eat <u>less</u> food in a	Never	73	24.3
	Rarely (only 1-	60	20

meal due to scarcity of food?	6 times this year)		
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	73	24.3
	Often (a few times each month)	61	20.3
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	33	11.0
In the past 12 months how often did food stored in your home run out and there was no money to buy more that day?	Never	101	33.7
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	69	23.0
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	90	30.0
	Often (a few times each month)	39	13.0
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	1	0.3
In the past 12 months how often did you worry about where food would come from? ( <i>Mathar bhitre koto chinta</i> from food or money worries).	Never	73	24.3
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	60	20.0
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	73	24.3
	Often (a few times each month)	61	20.3
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	33	11.0
In the past 12 months, how often did your family purchase rice?	Never	197	65.7
	Rarely (once every few months last year)	103	34.3
	Sometimes (a few times each month)	0	0

In the past 12 months how often did your family take food (rice, lentils etc.) on credit (or loan) from a local shop?	Never	199	66.3
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	66	22.0
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	35	11.7
	Often (a few times each month)	0	0
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	0	0
In the past 12 months how often did your family have to borrow food from relatives or neighbours to make a meal?	Never	225	75.0
	Rarely (only 1-6 times this year)	41	13.7
	Sometimes (7-12 times this year)	34	11.3
	Often (a few times each month)	0	0
	Mostly (most days/weeks)	0	0

The above table indicates that 76 per cent of the women eat less food during their VGD period. Thirty four per cent of the participants had to buy rice due the insufficiency. We can therefore draw a conclusion based on these findings that though 52 percent women are having square meals, they are not eating sufficient food and even the supply of rice from the programme is not enough for one third of the members of these household.

## MODELING FOR DATA ANALYSIS

We used ordered probit model for analysing the data.<sup>52</sup> The reason of choosing this model has been described in chapter 3 (research methodology). The mathematical formula of ordered probit model is as follows:

$$Y^* = X' \beta + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

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<sup>52</sup> Modeling and empirical analysis were done by Shamima Nasrin and Md Aslam Mia (PhD candidate, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, Malaysia).

Where  $Y^*$  is exact but unobserved outcome variable while  $X$  is the vector of the explanatory variables and  $\beta$  is the vector of regression coefficients which we are interested to estimate in this study.  $\varepsilon$  is the error term which is included in the model 1 to explain the variation in  $Y$  that cannot be explained by the included  $X$ s. The assumptions under this model are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Y &= 0 \text{ if } Y^* < k_1, \\ Y &= 1 \text{ if } k_1 \leq Y^* < k_2, \\ Y &= 2 \text{ if } k_2 \leq Y^*, \\ Y &= N \text{ if } k_N - 1 < Y^* \end{aligned}$$

$k_1$  and  $k_2$  are considered as "cut points" where  $k_1 < k_2$ .

However, it should also be noted that, the interpretation of the coefficients estimated under Probit model does not go with the conventional explanations, such as under OLS. Hence, there is some restriction in explaining the marginal effect of explanatory variables towards outcome variables. However, as this study basically wants to see the significance of the demography and households decisions making with food security, the appropriate explanations are provided accordingly based on the empirical estimation.

We have looked into two dimensions of food security, namely *individual food security* (IFS) and *households food security* (HFS). As food security is a latent concept, it is not appropriate to estimate or measure food security by looking into one or two dimensions only. Therefore, as many as nine relevant questions were asked to capture the content of food security and divided into two categories as IFS and HFS. Since we have primarily collected the data, hence we have the advantage of choosing the most suitable indicators of food security. Among the nine indicators, we have used a total 8 as they mostly capture the intended content of this study. Five among eight indicators were considered as IFS while three were considered for HFS. First, we have taken the average of five indicators to construct IFS and an average of three indicators as HFS and treated them as outcome variables. It is justifiable to construct the average of these indicators since they have followed the similar scale of answering the questions.

We have used ordered probit model to estimate the coefficient due to the nature of our dependent variable. Thus the empirical estimation for Individual food security and demography is as follows:

$$IFS_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 edu_i + \alpha_3 hedu_i + \alpha_4 emps_i + \alpha_5 occu_i + \alpha_6 emphs_i + \alpha_7 occh_i + \alpha_8 empom_i + \alpha_9 dpnd_i + \alpha_{10} tfm_i + \alpha_{11} noch_i + \alpha_{11} chiage_i + \alpha_{11} hown_i + \alpha_{11} hcond_i \alpha_{12} + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Empirical estimation of household food security can be derived as follows:

$$HFS_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 edu_i + \beta_3 hedu_i + \beta_4 emps_i + \beta_5 occu_i + \beta_6 emphs_i + \beta_7 occh_i + \beta_8 empom_i + \beta_9 dpnd_i + \beta_{10} tfm_i + \beta_{11} noch_i + \beta_{11} chiage_i + \beta_{11} hown_i + \beta_{11} hcond_i \alpha_{12} + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

We are interested to estimate  $\alpha_1$  to  $\alpha_{12}$  and  $\beta_1$  to  $\beta_{11}$  which are the coefficients of respective independent variables.  $\mu_i$  is the error term in both of the model.

We have also estimated the relationship of between household decision-making on individual and household food security.

$$IFS_i = \gamma_1 + \gamma_2 diet_i + \gamma_3 sof_i + \gamma_4 decbf_i + \gamma_5 foodpre_i + \gamma_6 coode_i + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

$$HFS_i = \delta_1 + \delta_2 diet_i + \delta_3 sof_i + \delta_4 decbf_i + \delta_5 foodpre_i + \delta_6 coode_i + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots (4)$$

Here we will estimate  $\gamma_1$  to  $\gamma_6$  and  $\delta_1$  and  $\delta_6$  which are the coefficients of respective independent variables.  $\mu_i$  is the error term for equation (3) and (4).

Description of our variables is shown in Table 5.4:

Table 5.4 Description of variables

Classification	Variables	Question	Description of the variables
Dependent Variable	Individual food security	How often did you eat three 'square meals' (full stomach meals) a day in the past 12 months. (availability of square meals)- AsqM	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the last 12 months, how often did you or any of your family have to eat	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week)

		wheat (or another grain) although you wanted to eat rice (not including when you were sick)? (Choice of food)-CoF	3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the last 12 months how often did <i>you yourself</i> skip entire meals due to scarcity of food? (Skip meals)-Smls	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the past 12 months how often did <i>you</i> personally eat less food in a meal due to scarcity of food? (Scarcity of Food)-ScFood	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the past 12 months how often did you worry about where food would come from? (worries to manage food)-WmgFood	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year)

	Households food security		1= Never
		In the past 12 months how often did food stored in your home run out and there was no money to buy more that day? (Scarcity of money)-SoMoney	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the past 12 months how often did your family take food (rice, lentils etc.) on credit (or loan) from a local shop? (Credit taking for food)-CrdfFood	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never
		In the past 12 months how often did your family have to borrow food from relatives or neighbours to make a meal? (borrowing food)-FoodBorrow	5= Mostly (everyday) 4= Often (few times each week) 3= Sometimes (7-12 times this year) 2= Rarely (1-6 times this year) 1= Never

### ***Description of independent variables***

Descriptions of independent variables are described in Table 5.5:



Table 5.5 Description of independent variables

Variable	Description of the variable	Definition
<b>Education (edu)</b>	Education of the women	1= None, 2=Primary,3=Secondary, 4=Above Secondary
<b>Education (hedu)</b>	Education of the husband	1= None, 2=Primary,3=Secondary, 4=Above Secondary
<b>Employment Status (emps)</b>	Employment status of the women	1=employed , 2=unemployed
<b>Occupation (occu.)</b>	Women 's occupation	1=day labour, 2=house maid, 3=garments worker, 4=beggar, 5=other, 6=not applicable
<b>Husband's occupation (occh)</b>	Occupation of husband	1=agriculture, 2=day labour, 3=petty tred, 4=self-employed, 5=service, 6=beggar
<b>Employment status of other family members (empom)</b>	Employment Status of other family status	1=employed , 2=unemployed
<b>Dependent in the family (dpnd)</b>	non-income dependent in the households	in number
<b>Total family members (tfm)</b>	total family member in the family	in number
<b>Number of children (noch)</b>	Number of children in the family	in number
<b>Age of children (chiage)</b>	Age of children in the family	in number
<b>Home-ownership (hown)</b>	Status of home ownership	1=Own, 2=Rented, 3=Other
<b>Housing condition (hcond)</b>	Types of housing	1= Brick Build, 2=Brick wall with Tin Roof, 3=Straw/soil and Tin, 4=Other
<b>Diet pattern (diet)</b>	Type of meal consume by the beneficiaries and households	1= Rice /Bread, 2= Rice/Bread + Vegetable, 3=Rice/Bread + Vegetable+ fish/meat, 4=Rice/Bread + veg + meat, 5=Other

<b>Sources of food (sof)</b>	Sources of food	1=Produce, 2=Produce+ buy, 3=Buy, 4=Other
<b>Decision of buying food (decbf)</b>	The gender of the person who decide what to buy for their day to day meals	1=Man, 2=Women, 3=Both, 4=Others
<b>Food preparation (foodpre)</b>	The gender of the person who cook the food	1=Man, 2=Women, 3=Both, 4=Others
<b>Cooking decision (coode)</b>	The gender of the person who take decision on cooking	1=Man, 2=Women, 3=Both, 4=Others

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 5.6 shows descriptive statistics of independent variables.

Table 5.6 Descriptive statistics of variables

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Observation</b>
<b>Education</b>	1.35	.478	300
<b>Husband Education</b>	1.38	.557	300
<b>Employment Status</b>	1.21	.412	300
<b>Occupation</b>	3.06	1.80	300
<b>Employment Status of husband</b>	1.87	.925	300
<b>Occupation of husband</b>	5.75	2.63	300
<b>Employment status of other family members</b>	1.75	.431	300
<b>Number of dependent</b>	1.71	.781	300
<b>Number of family member</b>	3.28	1.10	300
<b>Number of Children</b>	2.09	.934	300
<b>Children Age</b>	3.20	1.91	300
<b>Ownership of Home</b>	1.30	.657	300
<b>House Condition</b>	2.53	.533	300
<b>Diet</b>	2.40	.555	300
<b>Source of Food</b>	2.97	.161	300
<b>Decision-making of buying food</b>	1.55	.846	300
<b>Food preparation</b>	1.05	.389	300
<b>Decision-making on cooking</b>	1.13	.446	300

We have done the regression in two different stages of analysis (1) demographic impact on IFS and HFS and (2) household's decision-making impact on IFS and HFS. They are presented in table 5.7 and 5.8 respectively.

### **Food security and demography**

Table 5.7 shows the output of regression analysis of food security and demographic characteristics. The statistical result from the survey produced interesting results.

It reveals that education is significantly but negatively related with both individual and household food security. Our data set reveals that the most of the respondents belong to the group of either no education (64.3%) or primary education (34.3%) which suggests that the respondents have a low level of education. It also implies that lower level of education statistically and significantly negatively correlated with individual and household food security. Employment status of the women is significantly related with individual food security while this has no impact on HFS. Occupations of husband and employment status of other family members are positively and significantly related with IFS and HFS at 1% level. It suggests that employment of all family members are crucial factors to ensure food security. Number of dependents in the family, number of family members and number of children have not only been correlated with individual and household food security, the coefficients are positive and highly significant. Children's age is negatively and statistically significant correlated with household food security. It also implies that the household is better food secure with lower age of children.

Home ownership and house condition are both negatively and significantly correlated with household food security. Negative relation with home ownership implies that possession a house has a positive effect and renting or otherwise has a negative effect on household food security. Therefore, we can conclude that in order to ensure household food security, house ownership is an important determinant while there is no impact of house ownership on individual food security. Similarly, house condition is also negatively related with household food security while positively related with individual food security. On the one hand, findings on HFS and house condition suggests that a good house condition can contribute towards household food security i.e. a person with a good house condition is wealthier than a person with a relatively bad house condition and therefore can spend more on food for the household and thus increase the household food security. On the other hand, coefficient of house condition with individual food security shows positive signs.

### **Impact of household decision-making on IFS and HFS**

Coefficient of diet pattern shows negative correlation with IFS while decision of buying food items shows negative but significant relationship with IFS and HFS. In

both cases the relationship is significant at 1% level. Cooking decision is positively and highly significant correlated with IFS and HFS. In summary, we can say that the decision-making process of buying and cooking of food in the household has an impact on food security.

### Empirical estimation

Table 5.7 Demography and food security

Variable	IFS	HFS
<i>edu</i>	-0.935*** (0.199)	-1.212*** (0.213)
<i>huedu</i>	-0.163 (0.136)	-0.065 (0.144)
<i>emps</i>	1.050*** (0.371)	0.095 (0.387)
<i>occ</i>	-0.172** (0.085)	-0.078 (0.088)
<i>empsh</i>	-0.027 (0.137)	0.005 (0.144)
<i>occh</i>	0.231*** (0.049)	0.150*** (0.050)
<i>empom</i>	1.137*** (0.247)	0.943*** (0.262)
<i>fexp</i>	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001*** (0.0001)
<i>dpnd</i>	0.576*** (0.170)	0.336* (0.176)
<i>tfn</i>	0.638*** (0.111)	0.617*** (0.118)
<i>noch</i>	0.473*** (0.128)	0.341*** (0.129)
<i>chiage</i>	-0.019 (0.059)	-0.111* (0.060)
<i>hown</i>	-0.174 (0.110)	-0.461*** (0.119)
<i>hcond</i>	0.365** (0.180)	-0.565** (0.193)
<b>cut point1</b>	5.028 (1.047)	-0.989 (1.127)
<b>cut point 2</b>	6.092 (1.080)	-0.005 (1.130)
<b>cut point 3</b>	6.441 (1.084)	0.954 (1.122)
<b>cut point 4</b>	7.484 (1.092)	2.236 (1.122)
<b>cut point 5</b>	8.156 (1.097)	2.987 (1.122)
<b>cut point 6</b>	8.680 (1.105)	3.163 (1.121)
<b>cut point 7</b>	9.049 (1.109)	
<b>cut point 8</b>	9.264 (1.110)	
<b>cut point 9</b>	9.707 (1.112)	
<b>cut point 10</b>	10.760 (1.118)	
<b>cut point 11</b>	12.405 (1.172)	
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-420.24399	-300.936
<b># Observation</b>	300	300
<b>Pseudo R2</b>	0.371	0.422

Source: Authors estimation. Values in the parenthesis are standard error. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* are significant at 1%, 5% and 10%.

Table 5. 8 Decision-making and food security

Variables	IFS	HFS
<i>diet</i>	-0.599*** (0.125)	-0.187 (0.128)
<i>sof</i>	-0.227 (0.374)	0.698* (0.419)
<i>decbf</i>	-1.141*** (0.105)	-1.217*** (0.115)
<i>foodpre</i>	-0.191 (0.223)	-0.454** (0.227)
<i>coode</i>	0.812*** (0.197)	0.823*** (0.200)
cut point1	-4.373 (1.204)	-0.393 (1.325)
cut point 2	-3.730 (1.194)	0.219 (1.326)
cut point 3	-3.526 (1.194)	0.748 (1.330)
cut point 4	-2.882 (1.192)	1.464 (1.334)
cut point 5	-2.472 (1.193)	1.838 (1.334)
cut point 6	-2.191 (1.193)	1.914 (1.334)
cut point 7	-2.007 (1.194)	
cut point 8	-1.902 (1.194)	
cut point 9	-1.692 (1.194)	
cut point 10	-1.096 (1.193)	
cut point 11	0.259 (1.245)	
Log Likelihood	-550.378	-422.501
# Observation	298	298
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.171	0.183

Source: Authors estimation. Values in the parenthesis are standard error. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* are significant at 1%, 5% and 10%.

## TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION

Constructed on extant literature and a theoretical frame this section explains the relevance and understanding of the empirical result in two steps. First, focusing on the two research queries and second, based on the theoretical frame.

The first intension of this research was to explore the food security status of women participating in VGD. The descriptive statistics elaborated in table 5.3, provides the figures and percentages of FS and food insecure populations. Observing the statistics it seems that FS status of VGD participants are almost 53 per cent who are satisfied with their meals (three square meals most of the days during their VGD enrolment). Almost 23 per cent in this group also were closer to affording three

square meals a day. Aggregating these two numbers provides 76 per cent as food secure women which puts the food insecurity rate at 24 per cent. This segment of participants (food insecure) can be identified as extremely poor who are not capable of accessing their daily food. The national data of the country places 21.1 per cent of the total population at the extremely poor status (HIES, 2010). We therefore find a close link between the national data and VGD data. Moreover, the result shows that food ‘insecurity with hunger’ is totally absent among these members. Therefore, it can be said that VGD is improving their FS status as the programme targets women with severe food insecurity and vulnerable conditions.

However, observing critically, a big proportion of the participants (75 per cent) are eating less amounts of food than their requirement due to scarcity of food.<sup>53</sup> VGD has been categorised as a “*Social protection-Food security programme*” (Ministry of Finance, 2015) of the government. Therefore, having a number of 75 per cent of the population eating less food raises the question on the effectiveness of the planned objective as the main focus is to make the women food secure. Additionally, the “stress” amount (75 per cent) of where food will come from indicates the presence of vulnerability among women in acquiring food. FS cannot be measured only as taking three square meals mostly or often every week but, sufficiency of food is an essential component of FS according to its definition (Reutlinger and Knapp, 1980, Maxwell and Smith, 1992, Siamwala and Valdes, 1980, Sahn, 1989).

At this point the study proceeds to the next research question regarding the contributory socio economic factors of FS. Focusing on household FS, 34 per cent of households express their need to purchase rice which indicates the insufficiency of rice amount provided by VGD. Rice purchasing can be linked with the number of family members because consumption increases with an increase in the number of members. But, if the member is earning then it should not affect the FS condition as earning increases purchasing power. Therefore, the observation focuses on the relation between dependent family members (as they do not have any purchasing power) and FS. A reflection of the analysis based on empirical model (Table 5.7) specifies that both individual and household FS is positively related with the number of total family members and dependent members in the family (the more dependent, the more possibility of food insecurity). Dependent members are those who do not earn any income. When the number of these members increases, it reduces the purchasing power of the household. Therefore, this finding indicates that purchasing power is closely related to both individual and household FS. This

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<sup>53</sup> This amount was calculated based on Table 5.3, question 4 “In the past 12 months how often did *you* personally eat less food in a meal due to scarcity of food?” Excluding the response “Never” (24.3 per cent) and adding “Rarely” “sometimes” and “often” provides the figure 75.6 per cent of women eating less due to scarcity of food.

result is similar to the findings of Sen's (1981, 1985) research which indicated low purchasing power as a preventive factor of FS (Sen, 1981, 1995 in Mallick and Rafi, 2010, p.594). This statement is supplemented by our next finding which indicates that employment of family members significantly affects FS. Employment no doubt increases purchasing power. Moreover this finding is relevant to the study of Ravi and Engler (2014) indicating employment status of the household members affecting FS.

Our empirical result on relationship of food expenditure with household FS indicates that increased food expenditure has a positive impact in household FS. This result also supports the argument of Olson et al (1996) which identified low spending on food as a contributory factor of food insecurity. In addition to this finding, our research specified that the expenditure increase did not show any significant relationship with individual FS. Individuals in this research are all distressed women of the society participating in VDG. Therefore, it brings the understanding that, an increase in food expenditure does not affect the women which may be a result of household food distribution system of Bangladeshi society. Therefore, it resembles the study of Mallik and Rafi (2010) arguing that women experience higher malnutrition and food insecurity compared to their male counterparts in developing countries and Haddad et al (1996) concluding that this status is as a result of the household food distribution system where pro-male biases exist in the quality and quantity of food distribution.

Literatures have suggested that the educational level affects FS (Maitro and Rao, 2015, Knueppel, 2010, WFP, 2013). Our empirical research also supports this statement. In addition, this research identifies illiteracy or low level of education (below class 5) negatively affecting FS.

Bangladesh is one of the densely populated countries in the world with 160.4 million people (World population report, 2015) where population control was initiated to reduce the birth rate in the late 1980s. Along with this huge population the country also has a scarcity of resources. The poverty rate of the country is 31.5 per cent. Safety nets as VGDs were introduced in the country with an objective of poverty reduction and ensuring FS for the poor. Sustainability or all time access and availability of food is a mandatory requirement for being food secure. Therefore, it is important to assess how VGD is enabling women to become food secure. To explore this issue, we shall concentrate on our theoretical frame of CA.

CA explains how provided goods can be converted to *functioning* (Figure 5.1). This study considered the provided rice and skill development training as 'goods'. We may start with the question 'how the provided goods are enabling women to become food secure?' The empirical findings are a clear indication of the FS status of these women who are participants of VGD for the past 18 months. It is clear that VGD has improved women's food consumption as the category 'food insecurity

with hunger' was not observed in this group. Therefore, the programme has contributed to the acceleration of the food consumed by women upwards. The provided resource (rice) was a means of achieving the *functioning* of being food secure during the programme period.

However, to achieve a FS status, adequate food consumption should be sustainable. A sustainable food availability and accessibility will be possible when women can increase their purchasing power. Purchasing power can be increased by employing household members. Therefore, the skill development training can help women to expand their capabilities. Expanding capability is requisite to achieving FS. Available literature indicates that the high vulnerability of women's food insecurity in developing countries can be improved by empowering them (Bestman, 1995, Handa, 1996, Rogers, 1996). Hence, expanding capability can be an option for upgrading women's empowerment and hence record a positive contribution towards their FS by making food available and accessible sustainably. According to Sen, women's empowerment is highly influenced by their earning power, economic role outside the family and literacy (Sen, 2010). All these variables of well-being have one thing in common which is "*their positive contribution in adding force to women's voice and agency-through independence and empowerment*" (Sen, 2010, p. 191). The variables which have an impact on empowering women can be identified as: obtaining a job and earning a salary away from the house. Literacy is another component of empowering women.

The empirical evidence shows a relation between these two variables with women's FS. First, lack of education had a negative effect on FS. Observing the respondents educational qualification indicates 64 per cent illiterate women with 35 per cent having primary education. Therefore, the total representative women were illiterate or holding a very low level of education. Bangladeshi society views a woman literate if she can only write her name. The 35 per cent of women who claim to have some education are therefore basically those having a low level of education. This level of education cannot contribute towards empowering them. Hence, it clearly explains the empirical relationship between education and FS in our study. Second, work away from the house involvement of women specifies 79 per cent as working women. Among these 40 per cent work as non-skilled workers (as labour, domestic maid, and beggar) with a very low earning which does not provide them with a voice within the family. Moreover, the decision-making capacity of the women indicates that there is lack of freedom in this group, which is a sign of non-empowerment.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study investigated food security among VGD participating women with an additional objective of exploring the related socio-economic factors contributing to



women's FS. The measures of FS were based on the perception of VGD participating women who are categorised as vulnerable women of the society.

By estimating on the descriptive statistics we find 75 per cent of the studied population eating three times with less amount of food indicating a scarcity in their food availability and accessibility. Additionally, the ordered probit model identifies socio-economic factors related to their food insecurity. These two issues led to the conclusion that expanding capabilities of women to become food secure is requisite to making this segment of the population food secure. Empowering women should therefore be a vital component of a poverty reduction programme. This study therefore has important policy implications for the poverty reduction policies for vulnerable women not only in Bangladesh but also in similar developing countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and West Bengal of India where women are disadvantaged for similar reasons.

The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the dynamism of socio-economic factors and food security. However, this study has thrown up many questions in need for further investigation. A comparison between different food programmes will provide additional insights of the dynamism of food security and effectiveness of food programme. Future studies may carry out to investigate the impact of food security before and after enrolment of food programme and make a through comparison with control groups, which will enhance the understanding of food security in a greater extent.



# CHAPTER 6. MANAGING FOOD DURING CRISIS: VOICES FROM VGD WOMEN<sup>54</sup>

## ABSTRACT

From a qualitative rural field study in Bangladesh, this article identifies strategies adopted by deprived women in coping with food shortage during shock periods and explores how women strive to move away from a food insecure life with support from a governmental food providing safety net programme. Twenty three women were interviewed in order to identify the challenges they face and how they cope with such crises. The capability approaches of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum were used for analysing the contribution of provided resources toward actual *functioning* through individual and institutional capabilities. The article concludes that governmental food programmes act as short time support during crisis, but an important aspect to ensure sustainable food security for women of developing countries like Bangladesh is to develop their agency through institutional support.

## INTRODUCTION

In developing countries poor households experience hardship and become vulnerable to shocks (Dercon, 2002, p.141).<sup>55, 56</sup> These shocks can be caused by climatic disaster, economic fluctuation or specific reasons. The occurrences make daily life hard for people living in poverty. Bangladesh is a low income country with a national poverty rate of 31.5 per cent (HIES, 2010). Even though the household income and expenditure data (HIES, 2010) indicates a remarkable drop in poverty rate over the last two decades (from 59% in 1990 to 31.5% in 2010), a large number of the population is still highly vulnerable towards shocks (Indhira et

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<sup>54</sup> This article has been submitted in the Journal *Development in Practice*, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> In this literature poor household indicates the households which do not have enough resources or ability to meet all of their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter , health and education).

<sup>56</sup> Shocks can be defined as ‘adverse events that lead to loss of household income and/or productive asset’ (Indhira et al, 2011, p. 6).

al, 2011, p.2).<sup>57</sup> The rural poor may experience a whole variety of shocks besides natural disasters in their lifespan. These may be economic, social, political, health and lifecycle related shocks (Quisumbing, 2007, p. 8). These incidences lower the income of households and make it hard for the members to acquire food.

Food security is a highly discussed issue in the developing countries including Bangladesh, where a large segment of the population struggles for access to food.<sup>58</sup> A household becomes food secure if it can assure the members sustainable access to sufficient quantity and quality of food for a healthy life (Maxwell and Smith, 1992). Being food secure depends on four basic pillars which are availability of sufficient food, access of food, security covering vulnerability, risk and insurance and sustainability or all time presence of the previous three components. All time (sustainable) availability, access and security of food is a precondition of food security and incidences (e.g. various shocks) that disrupt these pillars expose households to conditions of food insecurity.

A food insecure household employs some mechanisms to cope with food crisis. These coping mechanisms can be short or long term and deal with momentary insufficiency or permanent changes in the path of acquiring food (Maxwell, 1996, p.293). These mechanisms can be categorised as individual/household coping mechanisms. In addition, the government may initiate some supportive programmes to help the vulnerable to move out of the crisis. Tackling the damage of natural, economic and individual specific shocks in the lifecycle and making the vulnerable be able to cope and move out of crises, the government of Bangladesh also has initiated specific social safety net programmes (SSN). The programmes are both short and long term. The short term programmes are aimed at immediate support while the long term seeks to improve lives while attaining sustainability for the poor households. Safety nets are mechanisms of both protection and promotion. These programmes produce an immediate effect on poverty reduction by providing food and redistributing income and can enable households to make future investment (Grosh et al, 2008, p.5) for better life.

At present seven SSNs are operated in the country with an aim of ensuring food security of the poor (Ministry of Finance, 2015). Only two among them are long term programmes: the vulnerable group development programme (VGD) and the food for work programme (FFW). The FFW is an infrastructure developing work programme which provides food (rice or wheat) instead of cash. On the other hand

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<sup>57</sup>Vulnerable in this literature indicates those, exposed to the possibility of being food insecure by shock events.

<sup>58</sup> “Food security is secure access at all times to sufficient food” (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.8)

VGD operates for two years with food support along with skills development training. These programmes training are provided to make this segment of the population capable of acquiring their own food. The programme also deposits some cash (taking from the participants each month) to provide a small amount of capital for future investment. Therefore, VGD can be considered as a protective and promotional SSN. VGD operates with deprived women affected by different types of shocks during their lifecycle with the aim of ensuring food security and making them capable of generating income by the skill development training.

This paper considers food security as an essential component of well-being. Therefore, when well-being is disturbed by inability of acquiring food due to several livelihood incidences this reality begs the question: how do the vulnerable cope with food crises during shock periods and how do they move from it. Do the supportive SSN programmes of the state lead them towards a sustainable improved life or do they act as only a relief operation for a specific time period? Food insecurity may appear as a result of different types of shocks. Bangladesh is well known for its climatic disasters which impact the suffering of the poor. Literature on these specific types of shocks and how the victims cope or struggle with them is abundant (Fakhruddin and Rahman, 2013, Haque et al, 2014, Basak et al, 2015; Mirza et al, 2015). However, besides climatic shocks, the poor of Bangladesh also become victims of specific household shocks such as (death of the main earning member, loss of job, long term illness of a family member and so on). These types of shocks bring a similar result to the poor and make them food insecure. There is a dearth of literature addressing coping strategies of the poor affected by these incidences. However, specific literature that illuminates deprived women's strategy of acquiring food during crisis period is lacking. VGD in Bangladesh was initiated not only as a protective mechanism but also to support this group of women in order to make them capable of acquiring their own food. The women's perceptions of this programme were an important area to explore as well as how this programme operated in order to achieve its objective.

The article on "Women, food security and socio economic factor: Empirical evidence from VGD members of Bangladesh" (chapter 5) reflected the food security status of these women. Additionally, evidence from the article "Social safety nets as interventions for promoting higher levels of food security" (chapter 4) indicated critical opinions of VGD operation based on the existing literature (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, Maniruzzaman, 2009 and Kabeer and Kabir, 2009). It was hard to find studies reflecting participant's views relating to their food insecurity and how VGD helped them to move out from their immediate crisis and long term stability. While the participating women are the core of the programme and considering their opinions and suggestions extremely valuable to explore the programme's effectiveness, this paper was developed based on the opinion and perception of VGD participating women. It seeks therefore to answer the following

questions: (1) What strategies do women adopt in coping with food shortage during shock periods (2) How is VGD assisting women to move out of the food crises?

This study suggests a critical approach. Analysis of food security programmes from a social science perspective needs to be interdisciplinary. It should also cover a two way view of the operation. The objectives are in the programme documents. Observing the programme operation and perceptions from the programme participants is extremely useful both retrospectively and prospectively and creates an understanding of the programme operation along with its challenges or successes. In addition, it can suggest a plan for future programme planning.

The critical approach will be used for analysing and assessing the food security ensuring programmes by utilizing interviews with women participating in VGD. Before explaining the programme operation, the status of the programme participants and their coping mechanisms will be explored to give an idea of their existing capacities and support before joining the programme. This will help assessing the programmes contribution towards improving the women's livelihood.

This paper makes three major contributions: first it fills the gap in literature by accommodating participants' views on SSNs in ensuring food security. Second, it explores the coping mechanisms during crisis times and pathways of graduating out from a food insecure life. Finally, the findings provide significant input for policy makers towards an effective SSN programme design.

The contribution is structured as follows. The first part elaborates the main concepts of household food security, livelihood shocks and coping strategies by reviewing literature. The theoretical framework and research method follows and leads to the empirical analysis of the study. Lastly, the concluding section initiates discussions on policy suggestions for the betterment of the SSN policy.

## **HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD SHOCKS**

In developing countries the poor can be affected through various shocks which make them vulnerable to food insecurity (FAO, 2013). Vulnerability can be defined based on three basic levels *“the risk of exposure to crisis, stress and shocks, the risk of inadequate capacities to cope with stress, crisis and shocks and the risk of severe consequences of, and the attendant risks of slow or limited recovery (resiliency) from crises, risk and shock”* (Chamber, 1989 in Watts, M.J. 1993). Food insecurity can be chronic, transient or cyclic. *‘Chronic food insecurity means that a household runs a continually high risk of inability to meet the food needs of household members. In contrast, transitory food insecurity occurs when a household faces a temporary decline in the security of its entitlement and the risk of failure to meet food needs is of short duration’ and ‘cyclical or seasonal food insecurity when*

*there is a regular pattern in the periodicity of inadequate access to food'* (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p. 15).

In developing countries people go through covariate and idiocentric shocks. Covariate shocks include the shocks which are common across the society while idiocentric shocks refer to household specific shocks. Common examples of covariate shocks include a reduction in remittance, food and fuel price hikes, natural disasters and political shocks. Health related shocks and death in the family are considered idiocentric (Rasmus et al, 2012, p.26).

Shocks faced by the poor in Bangladesh have been described in broad categories by Quisumbing (2007) and Indhira et al (2011). The shocks faced by Bangladeshi poor were categorised as climatic, economic, social, political, health related and lifecycle shocks (Quisumbing, 2007, p.8). The climate shocks are those which occur due to flooding during rainy seasons, cyclones and drought during summer time. People become homeless and lose their earning during these times. Therefore, in those cases the economic shocks come along with the climate shocks. Additionally, river erosion affects households near the riverside and eviction from accommodation due to illegal occupancy (this happens mainly in urban areas where the homeless take shelter in the unauthorised slums) also creates homelessness and unemployment. The political and social shocks arise due to unstable political situations, prolonged strike (*hartal*) and extortion by the crime syndicates (*Mastan*). Health shocks are related to long-time illness or death of the main income earning member or other members of the family. The life cycle shocks come from property division (after the death of father), expenses in daughter's marriage, paying dowry and illness related expenditures (Quisumbing, 2007).<sup>59</sup> The effect of these shocks cause a decrease in the income of the affected households and subsequently leads to a situation of food insecurity. The most frequent shocks that Quisumbing (2007) identified in his study are the expenses due to marriage ceremonies, dowry that the poor need to pay for their daughter's marriage, illness of the family member and flood during the rainy seasons. Indhira et al (2011, p.6) also identified the shocks for the Bangladeshi poor in four broad categories, such as economic, climatic, health and asset related. Economic shocks occur due to losing jobs or problems related to employment or business and reduced remittances. Climatic shocks include the damages caused by natural disasters as homes, crops or assets are damaged due to floods or river erosion while health shocks are related to the death or illness of the main income earning member. Theft and dowry during the marriage of a daughter are mentioned as asset shocks (Indhira et al, 2011, p. 6).

Whatever the shock type, it is clear that these incidences make the poor vulnerable and food insecure. Economic shock such as food price increase lowers food

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<sup>59</sup> Dowry is a payment that the groom receives from the bride's family during marriage.

consumption (Matz et al, 2015, Torres, 2013). Political and climatic shocks also contribute to food price hikes and may hence render people hungry.

## COPING STRATEGIES

Laver (2008) argued that “The term ‘Coping’ refers to the cognitive and behavioral forces employed to manage (reduce, minimize, dominate or tolerate) personal needs and the external demands of one’s environment, the latter having been deemed by the individual to exceed his or her resources” (Lever, 2008, p. 230). Folkman and Lazarus (1980, p. 223-224) described coping styles in two ways: problem focused and emotionally focused. The first addresses the problem and tries to interrupt the source of stress while the second one attempts to manage the emotional stress related to the condition. Bartman and Gardner (2008) made this discussion simple by providing following examples of problem and emotion focused coping strategies (Table 6.1).

Table 6. 1Example of coping strategies

Emotion focused	Problem focused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use humour or comedy</li> <li>• Reframe the situation in terms of importance, long-term impact, etc</li> <li>• Confide in someone else</li> <li>• Seek emotional support</li> <li>• Accept the situation</li> <li>• Divert your attention by working on another task</li> <li>• Think unrelated pleasant thoughts such as happy memories</li> <li>• Engage in physical exercise</li> <li>• Practice relaxation or meditation techniques</li> <li>• Practice forgiveness</li> <li>• See the situation in a different light, look for positive consequences of the situation, perceive a personal benefit, eg, personal growth, something you have learned, closer relationships or reprioritised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a plan of action</li> <li>• Use negotiation skills</li> <li>• Make constructive changes to a situation</li> <li>• Concentrate on the next step</li> <li>• Be assertive</li> <li>• Develop different solutions to the same problem</li> <li>• Apply time-management skills</li> <li>• Try to see things from the other person’s point of view</li> <li>• Draw on past experiences</li> <li>• Seek practical advice from others</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Ask for help with tasks</li> <li>• Acquire personal skills that could be useful in life (eg, time management, assertiveness)</li> <li>• Use a systematic approach to dealing</li> </ul>



goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn the problem over to a 'higher power'</li> <li>• Spend time with pets</li> <li>• Challenge any tendency to withdraw or isolate</li> <li>• Maintain a healthy diet</li> <li>• Attend professional counselling</li> <li>• Compare oneself to others who are facing far more challenging situations</li> <li>• Write down thoughts and feelings</li> <li>• Dispute or challenge one's own negative thoughts</li> </ul>	with problems
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Source: Bartram, D., & Gardner, D. (2008, p.229).

Stress causes discomfort in life and individuals cope in order to deal with these discomforts. Coping employs combining several forces, such as available resources, his or her motivation and behaviour aiming for bettering the discomfort (Habarth et al, 2009, p.207). This strategy can also be an indication of employing both problem and emotion based coping. While, combining available resources helps in to cope with the problem, motivation and behavioural practices helps to reduce the stress emotionally. Coping also differs depending on cultural and social contexts (Habarth et al, 2009, Matheny et al, 1989). Kumea (2004) pointed to coping strategies as related to culture by giving the example that African American women adopted praying and drawing on strength from ancestors as a coping mechanism.

Researchers such as Carver et al (1989, p. 268-269) identified coping mechanisms such as: active coping, planning, suppression, restriction and search for social support. Active coping can be elaborated as taking steps to improve the situation or minimise the effect. To plan for a method for confronting the stress is the planning mechanism. 'Suppression' is when a person withdraws herself from the competitive activities to allow full concentration of the challenge while 'restriction' is waiting for the appropriate opportunity to act. The last step (Search for social support) comes when a person needs advice, help, information, emotional support, empathy or understanding for coping with the condition (Lever, 2008, p.230).

The poor suffer income inadequacy and food insecurity in shock periods. Several strategies have been identified by researchers which the poor adopt to cope with crises in ensuring food security. A study on two South Asian countries (India and Nepal) showed that in the food insecure situation the poor goes for selling their animals, take loan from moneylenders, start for wage work, give their assets for

mortgage, and employ their children in works ( IFAD, 1998). Zalilah et al (2008) in their study on poor women in rural Malaysia concluded that when a family goes through shocks which end in food insecurity they go for expenditure cuts. A major way of reducing household expenditure was to stop schooling of their children. The other mechanisms were borrowing money to purchase food or borrow food from relatives, neighbours and reducing the number of meals (Zalilah et al, 2008). Another strategy of coping (Beegle et al, 2006, Guarcello et al, 2010) showed that to cope with household economic shocks the children drop out from school and enter the labour force.

Maxwell (1996) identified six food based coping strategies adopted by food insecure households such as (1) eating less preferred food, (2) limiting portion size, (3) borrowing food or money to buy food, (4) maternal buffering, (5) skipping meals and (6)going for an entire day without eating (Maxwell, 1996, p.294-295). These six indicators were used in the study to measure the severity of food insecurity of a household. Households adopting the first three (1-3) strategies to cope with food insecurity were considered to be in the same category of insecure status. Households taking the last three (4-6) were considered to be under a severe state of food insecurity compared to the previous households. The extreme severe coping strategy was to skip meals for the whole day (Maxwell, 1996, p.296).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The key concepts selected for this study are: shocks, food security and SSN programmes. In this regard the study concentrates on the ‘capability approach’ (CA) of Amartya Sen and the capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum’s CA). These two theories will be used as basic conceptual frameworks for analysing the topics.

Sen’s CA is a framework of evaluating and assessing the well-being of an individual as well as social policy (Robeyns, 2005). It focuses on a person’s ability of ‘doing or being’- which is identified as ones capability. The approach focuses on a person’s capability while measuring her well-being. These capabilities can be mentioned as a women’s potential enabling her towards *functioning* which is a combination of ‘being’ and ‘doing’. For example ‘being well-nourished’, ‘being sheltered’ and ‘being healthy’. Sen’s capability approach introduces a bridge between the persons earning and her ability to convert the earning into *functioning* (Sen, 1985). Another related factor in the approach is: the *real freedom*, which enables a woman to choose her *functioning* from various set of opportunities or possibilities. These issues (capability, freedom and *functioning*) depend on the opportunity or achieved resources and the choice of converting these resources towards ‘being and doing’ by a woman through her capabilities (Sen, 1999, Nussbaum, 2000).

*Real freedom* in CA is interlinked with the concept of *agency*. There are two cross cutting concepts of *agency* and *freedom* as *agency achievement* and *agency freedom*. Both are important components of well-being. *Agency achievement* is defined as “*the realization of goals and values she has reason to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being, and...refers to the person’s success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives*” (Sen, 1992, p.56). Therefore, an individual’s *agency achievement* is her “*success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives*” (Sen, 1992, p.56). They might include own well-being such as being well nourished and being healthy. These *agency achievements* can be enhancing for a woman’s well-being. But, these goals must be chosen by the individual, not by others. Therefore, *agency success* can be achieved when an individual achieves or gains her *agency objectives*. There are two types of *agency success* in CA: (1) *Realized agency success* and (2) *Instrumental agency success* (Sen, 1992, p.5). The *realized agency success* (RAS) is achieved when any individual’s goals or objectives are realised, whether she may or may not play any role in this achievement. On the other hand, *Instrumental agency success* (IAS) will be achieved if an individual plays a role in the achievement of her objectives. On the other hand an individual’s *agency freedom* is her “*freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce*” (Sen, 1992, p.57). This *agency freedom* may enhance a person’s own well-being.

Therefore, received resources do not alone enable a person towards *functioning*. Freedom is an essential component of a valued *functioning*. The person and the environment she is living in, is also important for her *functioning*. All these issues are taken into account in the CA.

The relation of commodities and the *functioning* to achieve ‘being’ and ‘doing’ can be classified as conversion factors. The conversion factors play a role in converting characteristics of the goods to individual *functioning*. Three types of conversion factors can play a role in converting the commodities to *functioning* for achieving certain ‘being’ and ‘doing’.

5. **Personal conversion factor:** These factors can be mentioned as “*metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills and intelligence*” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99). These factors influence how a person can convert the characteristics of a good or commodity to *functioning* (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99). For example a physically disabled person or a person who has never learned how to drive will get no help from a car or bicycle and this commodity will not enable his *functioning* to mobility.
6. **Social conversion factors:** Examples of these factors are “*public policies, social norms, discriminating practices, gender roles, societal hierarchies, power relation*” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99).

7. Environmental conversion factors: These factors are, for example, “climate, geographical location” (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.99).

*“The capability approach to a person’s advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functioning as a part of living. The corresponding approach to social advantage – for aggregative appraisal well as for the choice of institutions and policy- takes the sets of individual capabilities as constituting an indispensable and central part of the relevant informational base of such evaluation”* (Sen,2007, p.271). Hence this approach assists this study to evaluate the policy by focusing on the *capabilities, functioning and real freedom* of the selected women.

CA has been developed further by different scholars in recent years. Among them the work of Martha Nussbaum relates closely with the CA of Sen. Nussbaum’s capabilities approach is relevant to gender justice where she has developed a list of central human capabilities arguing that these capabilities form the basis for political principles all around the world (Nussbaum, 2003, p.43). She also argues that these capabilities can be demanded by the citizens of a country and should be included in the constitutional principles (Robeyns, I, 2005, p.105). The central human capabilities she has listed are: (1) life (2) bodily health (3) bodily integrity (4) senses, imagination and thought (5) emotions (6) practical reason (7) affiliation (8) other species (9) play and (10) control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-42).<sup>60</sup>

There are some basic differences in Sen’s and Nussbaum’s approach. According to Sen, capability concentrates on the real and effective opportunity whereas Nussbaum pays more attention on a person’s skill and personality traits (Robeyns, 2005, p. 104). Regarding agency and well-being, Nussbaum’s CA differs from Sen’s approach. Nussbaum acknowledges agency as needed for well-being and argues that these two components can be placed under the frame of capability and *functioning*. For example, if a woman possesses the capability to do a specific job, has the freedom to choose and achieves the desired *functioning* then the woman herself is an *agent* with regard to that specific job. In this example capability for the job represents the woman’s freedom of choice as well as achieving valued *functioning*. Therefore, she identifies that the *agency achievement* concept of Sen can be considered as a sub set of *functioning* which a woman freely chooses and achieves. Hence, the freedom and agency both can be represented by the *capability* and *functioning* concept.

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<sup>60</sup> For details see Martha Nussbaum (2003) p. 41-42

This study considers both of these approaches as it focuses on the participating women's skill as well as provided opportunity. Provided opportunities are the support received from VGD (food, skill development training) while capabilities of the women are considered as the skills. The analysis will focus on how these capabilities help to convert the provided opportunities towards *functioning*. This study suggests that the targeted women need to employ capabilities and real freedom to convert the provided resources towards being food secure. Moreover, the study pledges to identify factors which play an important role in developing the capabilities of the target group which enable them to cope during tough times.

The capabilities approach of Nussbaum has been developed and used for analyzing gender in justice. This paper targets deprived women of the society as representative. Therefore, in addition to Sen's CA it also employs Nussbaum's CA and relates the central human capability set as a focus for comparative quality life measurement.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### The study area and participants

There are a total of 64 districts and 488 sub districts in Bangladesh. The study area was a sub district (Upazilla) named Shonargaon.<sup>61,62</sup> Shonargaon is located 27 kilometres south-east from the capital Dhaka. It constitutes 10 unions. The total population is 400,358 (Male 204,438 and female 195,920) with 88,820 households (BBS, 2015). The 10 unions are well connected with each other. The main occupation and livelihood strategies of the population are agriculture, petty trading, domestic works, rickshaw pulling and construction labour. Due to the developing ready-made garment industries in the area, a section of the population earns their daily income from these industries.

Data was collected from women participating in VGD programmes. A total of 23 women were selected randomly from 10 unions. Participants were enrolled in the two years programme which started from January, 2012 with an end date of

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<sup>61</sup> To serve the administrative purpose of local government in Bangladesh it has been divided into 7 Divisions, 64 districts, 493 Upazillas and 4550 union councils. Where districts function as sub division, upazilla as sub district and Union councils as sub Upazilas administrative unit.

<sup>62</sup> The study area in both chapter 5 and 6 are the same. These 23 selected women are among the 300 selected women participating in the article "Women, food security and socio economic factors: Empirical evidence from VGD members of Bangladesh" (Chapter 5).

December 2013. Data was collected from June to August 2013. Therefore, all participating women were almost at the last stage of their participation in the programme. This stage enabled the research to observe the programme impact on their lifestyles and explore the changes that occurred (if any) by the time of programme completion.

### **Vulnerable group development programme (VGD)**

VGD (starting from 1975) is one of the largest safety net programmes in the country. The programme provides a monthly food ration for two years combined with income generating and life skill training including personal saving programmes and access to micro-financing or NGO membership (Akhter, 2010 p. 9). It targets only the poor female headed households who are assumed as vulnerable to food insecurity. The selection characteristics of VGD are targeted towards the most vulnerable women of the society.<sup>63</sup>

VGD was selected as a sample programme because it is one of the oldest and long-term SSN in the country. Another reason for selecting this programme was that the participants were female and identified as deprived in the society. Moreover, the programme includes some skill development training which was assumed as a component of developing capabilities. Therefore, this programme caught the interest of the researcher because of its long term operation on the vulnerable segment of the population and it includes some capability developing mechanism.

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<sup>63</sup> According to VGD criteria vulnerable are selected based on (a) Women who are head of the households where there is no adult income earner male in the family. The programme gives preference to women who are widow, divorced, and separated or women with disable husband.

(b) Households having no land ownership or own less than 15 decimals of land.

(c) Doesn't have a regular source of earning- The normal criteria is to select households which earn less than BDT 300 (Approximately USD 38 ) per month from daily or casual labour.

(d) Members of the house often skip their meals due to food insufficiency- Consumes less than two full meals per day.

(e) Poor housing condition regarding construction and sanitation facilities

(f) Who are not already members of other food and/or cash based programme or have been VGD participants at any time.

Priority is given to (1) Women who are physically fit and have the ability and interest to work in groups and (2) Have ability of developing their economic and social condition (Mannan and Ahmed, 2012, p.5).

### Data collection

Permission to collect the data on the participants was obtained from the Sonargaon government administrative office (Upazilla nirbahi office). The Union representatives helped the research by providing names and addresses of participant's from their programme participant list register. To establish trust and lessen the suspicion of the women the research purpose was clearly described. Additionally, it was mentioned that the information is gathered for research purposes and that there is no involvement of the programme authorities.

The research was qualitative in nature and the detail data collection process has been described in chapter 3 (research methodology).



Photo 6.1 Interviewing VGD women<sup>64</sup>

## SHOCK IN LIFECYCLE AND COPING STRATEGIES

The approach taken here is to explain different types of coping mechanisms that Bangladeshi women take to survive in shock periods. The information was gathered by interviewing women, who all went through a tough time in their life.

The findings from these interviews and observations refer to the information on women's coping strategies before receiving VGD support. These coping strategies have been divided in two segments: Problem focused coping and emotionally focused coping. This literature identifies food insecurity as the main problem. Problem focused coping are those strategies that women took to achieve food for the household. On the other hand to get relief as they also appeared to be under emotional stress went through a variety of coping strategies in this regard.

The first section explores their problem focused coping strategies to identify how these women attempted to ensure food for the household members. There were

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<sup>64</sup> Interviewing the women by author.

different ways which will be described in the subsequent section. The collected data were the basis of understanding the question: What type of shock did the women face and how did they cope with their food insecure situation? The information shows that there was scarcity of food during crisis period. Therefore, support was needed to cope with the food shortage. VGD came as an additional support during this period offering food security as social protection. But still, there were signs that in all cases VGDs contribution was also not enough. There were instances where the women still needed additional assistance even after being enrolled in VGD. The following discussion aims to provide an understanding of the pathways of coping with crisis. Their own words are quoted in certain parts of the text to offer a better understanding and to get insight into the immediate and mid-term grievances on the one hand but also responses which show that the women have a strong agency.

The majority of women participating in the programme came from a poor background. Their stories indicate the occurrences which led them towards a deprived status. The main shocks that led to their deprivation economically and socially were mainly death of the principal male income earner in the household, illness of a member in the family or loss of job. Moreover, abandonment by the husband and presence of a retarded child in the family were other examples of crises that led to their deprivation. The following highlights evidences of the incidences or shocks which led to women becoming distressed.

Sheuli, a young woman 29 years of age lost her husband. They were apparently solvent as they owned two houses in the village and a cloth store in the capital city Dhaka. They earned income from the business and house rent. The earnings were enough to sustain the three member family (Sheuli, her husband and her little son). In the fifth year of their marriage her husband became affected with liver cancer.

*“I decided to do everything I could to save my husband. He was sick for five years and to meet treatment expenses I sold both of the houses and also our shop. When he died, we didn’t have anything left. I didn’t have any earning, any home or any job. I had to be dependent on my father. He gave me a single room to stay beside my uncle’s house in the village. My father works in the capital (Dhaka) and my only brother who was a student of class ten, started working to bear my expenses”* (Interview, July 16, 2013).

Sheuli is probably unusual since her case clearly shows a downward social mobility because of her husband’s disease.

There were two cases where the husbands left the women for another marriage and as they were not divorced they couldn’t claim any support from them.

Rokeya’s (60) husband left her 20 years back and she was alone with 4 daughters. The first daughter was a college student at that time. *“I couldn’t imagine that my*



*husband will leave me after 21 years of our marriage. He was the only earning member of the family. The earning was almost enough to meet the food expenses of the family as we had our own mud built house. I didn't have any experience of working outside my home. Fortunately my two brothers working in Saudi Arabia started sending money every month for my food expense. I saved some money and bought 24 hens and started selling eggs. I saw my mother selling eggs. So, I was familiar with this work. I took the help from my brothers for one year because my elder daughter got a job in the Union Council office. At present all of my daughters are married. Three of them live with their husband in the capital but my elder daughter and her family lives with me.” (Interview July 21, 2013).*

Rokeya's example indicates social injustice where a man can leave the women without bearing her expenses. She was fortunate that her brothers came with support. But her ability and courage to start her own earning shows her agency.

A further finding suggests that sometimes political instability makes a family vulnerable as the main income earner of the family may lose their job or need to stop it for a certain period. The political instability in Bangladesh started from the mid of 2012 and frequent 'Hortals' (strikes) were called by the opposition party. When these strikes go on, the activists in favour of strike have an intention of creating instability and an uncomfortable situation in citizen's daily life. They do not allow vehicles to move normally. They force the shops and markets to close. They do not hesitate to burn or damage it if the owners do not act in favour of them. Therefore, the people in the transport business cannot take their vehicles out in streets or boats in to rivers as there are high risks of damage.

*“The year 2012 and 2013 has made us extremely economically poor as my husband cannot take his boat out for transporting. That is the only income source of our family. One day at the mid 2012 he was threatened by the political ‘Mastans’ (muscleman) that if he continues the boating service in the days of strike they will burn the boat by fire. So, he doesn't go out for work every day and you know that from December 2012 these strikes increased and our family income decreased. From the beginning of 2013 they started frequent strikes which made our income unbearable to meet the food expenses of my family. I took micro-financing loan from a local NGO and bought a cow and started selling milk and employed my son in a small shop” (Interview of Taslima, July 15, 2013).*

Taslima's inability in acquiring food was due to the unstable political situation of the country where prolonged strikes and extortion by the crime syndicates made the household vulnerable to food security.

## MANAGING AND COPING IN CRISIS PERIOD

Managing and coping with these types of human made occurrences were hard for most of the women. The majority first went to get support from their parents and relatives. Among the 23 cases 11 cases got some support from their parents and in-laws in the initial stage after the shock. In two cases neighbours helped. In the remaining cases the victims had to manage by themselves.

Immediately after the illness, death or political disturbances the women expressed that they asked for help from their parents or in-laws. Most of the time, they got a temporary shelter from their close ones. It helped them to plan for their future. Support from the family was most commonly from brothers, brother in-law and parents. The support received was shelter, money or food. In most of the cases the women and children got shelter from their parents or in-laws.

Nazma's case was different from the others. She is married and her husband is employed. Her husband works as an 'Imam' (priest) in a local mosque. With his present earning he can manage to maintain his family. But, Nazma is his second wife and he married her without taking the consent of his first wife. Therefore, the first wife filed a complaint to the court and to get out of it he compromised with the first wife and brought her back with him. He maintains two families. He now gives the majority of his earnings to his first wife and three sons. Every month he gives a very small amount of money to Nazma to bear the cost of two sons and a daughter along with herself. The amount is extremely low to manage a living. Nazma's mother is a domestic maid. She gave shelter to Nazma and provides the food for her and her grandchildren.

On the other hand Rokea had three brother in-laws working in Saudi Arabia who send remittances to cover her monthly expenses on rice, oil and pulse (legume).

*"I got the food support from my brother in-laws and as I had a small room to live I could manage the initial shock with my four daughters"* (Interview July 21, 2013).

Several activities were undertaken by the women to cope with the shock. Thirteen among the 23 victims started working as domestic maids. It involved daylong household work in the employer's house (e.g. wash cloths, wash the dishes, clean the house etc.). Shamsunnesa worked in 4 different houses daily. The jobs were physically stressful for her as she had to carry big buckets of water from the municipality water source to the house which was about 30 meters away. She had to fetch 16 buckets daily. The work in the other three houses was pasting spices manually, washing cloths by hand and sweeping and washing the floor of the employer's house.

*“I developed a very painful disease after about four years working so hard. I had back pain and pain in my knees. Then one day I met a man who worked as a plumber. He felt bad observing my situation and married me. I thought that this marriage will give me a relief. But after my marriage I saw that his income was also very small to maintain the family. So, still now I work in two houses”* (Interview July 22, 2013).

Razia and Asma mentioned that for survival they did not have any other option except begging. They begged from door to door. At the end of the day they had earned some cash and food. Sometimes they got rice, which they boiled at the end of the day and ate with salt and chili. They always took their minor child with them during begging. Carrying minor children from door to door enabled them to gain sympathy of people and most of the days there were people who gave food to the child.

*“People became very sympathetic and generous when they saw the children crying for food. Almost every day the children had food to eat while begging from door to door”* (Interview July 12, 2013).

There were some women who took micro-financing loans as well from different NGOs. Taking micro-financing loan was an effective coping mechanism for Hosne Ara. Hosne Ara’s husband worked as a labourer in Saudi Arabia and she lived with her in-laws. In an 18-year period her husband came only five times to Bangladesh during which he stayed for 1-2 months. He sent money for the family expenses to his mother (Hosne Ara’s mother in-law). However, she did not give any money to Hosne Ara. But, since she was living with them she ate with the family. Unfortunately, when her husband came for the fifth time after her marriage, he died in a road accident. After this she did not leave her in-laws family. She continued to live with them and applied for micro-financing loan from Grameen bank. With the money she bought a sewing machine and started sewing and that enabled her to bear the expenses of the family.

*“The sewing gave me some money as people like my clothes. With this earning I was able to make some savings which enabled me to buy a cow. I sold milk and earned extra money from it. My father and mother in-law were old and they required treatment. I could spend my money for their treatment and also it was possible for me to meet the food requirement of my family members”* (Interview July 11, 2013).

Another strategy for managing and coping with the shocks was to organise marriage of an adult daughter. Fatema had two sons and a daughter who were studying in class 10 when her husband died. She took some micro credit loan to give dowry to her daughter’s wedding. She employed one of her sons in a food shop and started working as a domestic maid.

*“You know in our society I don’t feel secure with an adult girl in my house and no adult male. The local Mastans (muscleman) disturbed her and I was always scared of her to be kidnapped or raped. So I fixed her marriage and paid huge dowry by taking the loan. Then me and my son started to earn and run the family”* (Interview July 14, 2013).

Salema, Fatema Begum, Taslima and Morsheda said that they employed their sons/daughters, including the minor ones in jobs, such as working in a restaurant, garments factory, salt industry and small T-Shirt factory. Employing sons and making them earn was another strategy for coping with the situation.

On the other hand Salma was afraid of taking loans from the micro-financing institutions. After the sudden death of her husband in a road accident she sold her house to raise money for dowry to her teenaged daughter, employed her son in a garments factory and took shelter in her parents’ house. In her words: *‘I was afraid to take any loan as there was no way of repaying. So I sold the house for money for securing my daughter as well as reducing the burden of one member and employed my only son who was 16 years’* (Interview July 19, 2013).

### **COPING WITH FOOD SHORTAGE**

As this contribution focuses on food security of deprived. Coping with food shortage was an important area to find how these women ensured food for the household members before enrolling in VGD. The strategies to cope with food shortage highlighted from the interviews were: skipping one meal, going for low cost food (replacing with cheap alternative food) and eating smaller portions (reducing quantity of consumption /eating less amounts). The following statements can be helpful to understand the coping strategies taken by women in rural Bangladesh.

Sehnaz said that after the death of her husband her family became dependent on her son’s income. His monthly earning was only TK 3000 (USD 38) and it was therefore not possible to take three meals a day with this income. They took two meals one in the morning and the next in the afternoon.

Another option of coping was exchanging food items with low cost food. For example, instead of taking rice in the morning it was replaced by Muri (puffed rice) or Chira (flattened rice). Even wheat was taken instead of rice because of its low cost.



Photo 6.2 Chira, Muri and Ruti<sup>65</sup>

Hosne Ara's mother in-law provided her wheat during times of crisis. "*We ate Ruti (Made of wheat) twice daily. We couldn't think of having rice that time*" (Interview July 11, 2013).

The women mentioned that they skipped their breakfast and took a late lunch and had a very light dinner. Skipping one meal was a common strategy for coping with the situation. They did not get egg, meat or fish. Rice or wheat (Ruti made from wheat) was the main course. Sometimes they took it with chili and salt which is very cheap and most of the times they collected green leafy vegetables (Shak) which grow in the nearest fields and beside the lakes.

### EXPENDITURE REDUCTION AREAS

Some discussions with the women were aimed at gathering knowledge on the expense patterns of the participants during the shock period. Which areas they prioritised and the areas where they paid less attention?

The respondents were very quick in responding to this issue. Most of them mentioned that they didn't pay attention to education and clothing of the family. Food was the most important segment where there was no family member who was ill. They also revealed that the case was a bit different where there was a sick member who needed treatment.

*'My children need food to live. Clothing and education is not a necessity. So, I took my son out from school and employed him in a restaurant'* (Interview of Salema, July, 19, 2013)

The answer was almost the same in all cases. Some women felt that education is a need, but higher secondary education (year 11-12) is not free for boys.<sup>66</sup> In the case

<sup>65</sup> These three photos were taken from internet to give an idea about the foods taken by VGD women.

<sup>66</sup> Education is free up to grade twelve for girls and there are stipends and free meals for girls coming from poor households which attracted some parents to send their girls to schools.

when there was a financial crisis in the household they preferred to cut expenditures on education. In Bangladesh primary and secondary (class 1 to 10) education is free for all. Some respondents elaborated that it was not only to reduce the expenditure, but also to get some income by employing their schoolgoing sons.

### PRIORITIZING MEDICINE VERSUS FOOD

There were 10 cases where the respondents had illnesses in their family during the crisis period. Most of the sick were either the husbands or children. There was one case where the respondent herself suffered from a liver disease (Jaundice) which lasted almost a month.

When Pori Banus' husband had blood cancer she didn't have any money. She sold her house for the treatment. *"It was hard to manage food for the family and medicine both at the same time. I skipped one meal and went for medicine. Medicine was very important as I wanted my husband to be well"* (Interview, July 10, 2013).

Nine women narrated that in the crisis period they prioritised the expense of medicine more than food. Only in one case where the woman herself was ill, explained that she preferred food to medicine. *"I couldn't think of prioritizing the expense of medicine for me keeping my children hungry. So, most of the time I did not buy medicine for me. That's why it took more time than normal to recover"* (Interview of 'Farida', July 10, 2013).

In a nutshell, Table 6.2 presents the types of shocks in women's lifecycle and coping strategies of women during crisis.

Table 6. 2 Shocks and coping strategies

Indicators		Number	Per cent Approx.(%) <sup>67</sup>
	Death of main earner of the family	11	48
	Long term illness of a family member	4	17
	Left by husband	2	9

<sup>67</sup> The number has been rounded to omit the 9 decimal numbers. For example 11 participants' out of 23 women is 47.82608696 per cent which was converted to 48 and so on.

<b>Types of shocks</b>	Losing Job	4	17
	Married with a married man	1	4.5
	Divorce	1	4.5
<b>Coping strategy</b>	Working as domestic maid	8	34
	Joining a service (Garments factory and UP office)	2	9
	Micro-finance loan	3	13
	Domestic maid and Giving Child for adoption	1	4.5
	Employing son/daughter	1	4.5
	Begging	2	9
	Domestic maid and Employing son/daughter	3	13
	Micro-finance loan and employing daughter	1	4.5
	Micro-finance loan, domestic maid and employing son, asset selling and daughters marriage	1	4.5
	Micro-finance loan employing son and daughters marriage	1	4.5
<b>Coping with food shortage</b>	Skip 1 meal/day	16	70
	Skip 1 meal and go for low cost food	7	30
<b>Expenditure</b>	Clothing and	23	100

reduction area	education		
<b>Prioritizing between medicine and food</b> (only 10 who had sick family member) <sup>68</sup>	Medicine	9	95.5
	Food	1	4.5

### EMOTIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

Similar to the research of Habarth et al (2009) and Matheny et al (1989), this study also noticed different types of emotional coping depending on the cultural and social context. All the women were Muslim who had a great faith in Almighty Allah. It was a common belief that their lifestyles will improve one day by the grace of the Almighty. Therefore, “In Shaa Allah” and “Ma Shaa Allah” were frequent phrases used by the women.<sup>69</sup> “*Ma Shaa Allah my son has adjusted working in the food store and has started receiving regular salary. Our lifestyle will improve in near future In Shaa Allah*”(Salema, July 23, 2013). Besides these two religious phrases, all women mentioned that *Salah* (prayer) and reciting from the holy Quran reduces their stress. Crying while praying and reciting was also a way of stress release.

Farida was the daughter of a village singer. Her father was not a professional singer but the villagers came to him often to listen to his songs. She was very fond of her father’s voice and also loved to sing with him. When she got married her husband also appreciated her singing. Her husband was a patient of brain tumour. He was still alive but completely dependent on the family members. Farida has four daughters and a son. Three daughters are married and her son works in a ready-made garments factory. She works as a domestic maid. She said that singing helps her to find mental peace and that whenever she feels depressed she sings. She loves

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<sup>68</sup> The ten cases are those who had a sick family (short or long term) member. This number should not be confused with the four who had long term illness in the family. Because the long term illness was the reason of being deprived. These ten women were those who had short term illness of a family member during their crisis period. This section was created to identify their priority between food and medicine during crisis period.

<sup>69</sup> Both of these two words are Arabic expressions from the holy Quran. In Shaa Allah means “If Allah wills it”. Ma Shaa Allah is a phrase of showing appreciation to Almighty which means “By the will of Allah”.



the songs of Lalon Fakir.<sup>70</sup> She thinks that Lalon understood the sorrow of poor people. Farida notes with passion, *“Ma Shaa Allah my daughter also has a sweet voice and she loves to accompany me while I sing. We sing together and that’s when I forget my stress and depression”* (Interview, July, 10, 2013).

*“Carry me to the other shore I’m in a state to make the crossing  
Oh, Merciful friend!  
I alone await the ferry, the Friend sits on are boats planks  
At this hour of crisis, no one but you can save me.  
I’ve neglected all my prayers, and never followed the Friend of the Fallen  
That’s why I crave your mercy,  
If you don’t help one in quandary, the title you bear will be a misnomer,  
Lalon says, In that event, no one will call you the Friend of Fallen”.*<sup>71</sup>  
(Lalon song, sang by Farida)

Lalon describes the hope and sorrow of the women and the boat symbolises the inherent wish to reach the other side.

Observing the women coping with their emotional stress provides another dimension to this study. The emotional coping by women was very much related to their cultural and social background. Labott and Martin’s (1990, p.53) research shows crying is associated with disorder or stress. Moreover, emotional weeping plays a role in predicting disorder (Labott and Martin, 1990, p.53). When a woman cannot emotionally bear the stress she bursts in tears. In this study most of the times the tears came out while praying to Allah, and seeking help from him. The Muslims believe that no one except Allah can rescue them from their sorrow. While seeking help from whom they perceive to depend on (Allah) in crisis periods they express their emotions by crying. This coping strategy gives them the space of releasing their stress. Searching for momentary peace can also be identified as an emotional coping mechanism. Farida’s example of singing with her family members is a strategy of diverting her attention from the stress by spending the time doing what she enjoys as an emotional relief.

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<sup>70</sup> Lalon Fakir (1774-1890) was a Bengali songwriter, singer, saint and social reformer. Lalon believed against religious conflict and violence. He did not believe in cast or classes and took stand against racism by his writings and singing. The songs of Lalon concentrate on reality and describe day to day problems in a simple way. Lalon songs are very popular in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Several movies and dramas have been developed based on his life in Bangladesh and West Bengal.

<sup>71</sup> The original song is in Bangla (Ami opar hoye boshe achi) translated by Abu Rushd in *Songs of Lalon Shah* (1990, p.27).

Apart from emotional coping a third way confronting choices was being selected or targeted by the VGD programme administration. This in itself can be a challenge.

## ENROLLING IN VGD PROGRAMME

The women interviewed for this study were participants of the VGD programme. They had been in the programme for one and a half year. All 23 participants were asked questions regarding the programme operation. The amount of rice they received every month, the saving nature, the training they received and how VGD was contributing towards their improved lifestyle. According to the programme description participants were provided with 30 kg of rice each month as food support. Additionally, elementary skill development training was included in the programme planning with an objective of developing potential knowledge for income generation. Furthermore, the programme had an objective of accruing some savings for the women to make them capable of investing in the future.

This study explored the operation of VGD by interviewing the women. The findings show that the committed rice amount differed from the provided rice amount in all cases. The women received fewer amounts than committed each month. All participants (100%) mentioned that they did not receive 30 kg of rice every month. It was cited that the amount they received varied from 18-20 kg each month. Among 23 participants 54% mentioned that the amount is 20kg whereas 35% said it was 19 kg and according to 11% it was 18 kg. No matter what the actual amount was it was clear that they at least receive 10kg less than the amount they have been promised every month.

To find the authenticity of this complaint, the programme manager (the Chairman of Union Parishad Office) was asked about the variation in rice distribution. He agreed and mentioned that they needed additional money for the rice transportation, loading and unloading cost.

*“You see we have to bear the transportation, loading and reloading expenses. We do not receive any money from the government for this purpose. So, we create our own fund by selling the rice. Besides, the Union Parishad Office needs some maintenance work. We also use the fund to maintain our office. The government allocation for maintenance is not sufficient”*(Chairman, union Parishod, July 24, 2013).

Women with small family sizes (3-4 members) mentioned that the amount was sufficient for their consumption. But families consisting of more than 4 members declared that the amount was not sufficient for their monthly consumption.

Another obstacle mentioned by the participants was regarding the rice distribution dates. All of them cited that there was no specific date for the rice distribution. In

that case the question was how they knew when to collect the rice. The procedure of informing the women was not at all professional or transparent. The Union Parishod (UP) office assistant informed a few participants (not all of them) when the rice would arrive and the news spread by word of mouth. But five (21.7%) of the women reported that they received the news late as their households were at a distant location from the UP office. Three (13%) women mentioned that as their rice rations diminished they came regularly to the UP office to enquire when they would get the next supplies. In this way they would end up visiting the UP office several times during the month until the supplies came. Therefore, a communication gap between the programme administration and the women was visible.

## TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT

VGD has an intention of developing the women's capacity for income generation. Therefore, it includes skill development training in the programmes' activities. The skill development training includes poultry and livestock rearing and homestead gardening. All women interviewed in this study were asked about the training they received. All of them mentioned that there was a training lecture in the first week of their enrolment. The lecture contained specific issues about what women can do to earn some income such as home gardening, poultry rearing and sewing. But there were no practical training opportunities in the programme.

*"I was very interested in sewing. When I heard that I shall receive training from VGD, I was very inspired and thought that I may employ this learning for my future earnings. But unfortunately there was no practical training provided in the programme. The trainers only mentioned about some skills which can help us to earn, such as home gardening, poultry rearing, livestock rearing, sewing and so on. I already know that I can generate income by sewing. What I need is to learn it professionally"* (Sheuli, July 16, 2013)

This statement indicates the interest of the women in developing their own income generating activities. Furthermore, it also reflects a gap in VGDs programme activities and operations. Informing women what to do cannot be defined as skill development training. There should be practical aspects of learning. The women participating in the programme are poor and illiterate. They do not have the ability to learn a specialised skill (such as sewing) or being enrolled in a training institution with paying the required fees (as they need to pay fees to be enrolled in a specific programme). Therefore, incorporating practical trainings to learn a specific work will help women to develop their skill.

VGD also provides some savings for the women. The saving criteria were initiated in the programme with an objective of providing money for future investment. Due to this reason, it was mandatory for the women to deposit TK 50 (USD 0.67) every month in the programme office account. After the completion of the programme the

women received their savings which the programme administrators encouraged them to invest in a small business.

*“If we don’t have the skills how can we invest money on that? I am very interested in rearing a cow, and want to generate income by selling milk. But there are lots of practicalities that women need to know during this cow rearing and milk selling. Even, I didn’t know what to do or where to go if the cow gets sick. So, without gaining the practical skill and knowledge it’s not possible to invest. We cannot take risks”* (Majeda, July 10, 2013)

Two women were identified who were not eligible for being participants in the programme. One woman was participating for the second time and the other was a worker of UP office who’s husband had an income. According to VGD selection criteria both of them were not eligible to be enrolled in the programme as one of them had already participated in the programme and the other had a husband who had an income. It was found that both of them had close relations with the UP office employees who helped them to become members of VGD. This example highlights two issues connected to mismanagement: (1) including women not meeting selection criteria and (2) corruption in member selection.

All the above mismanagement in programme operation support the findings of Khuda (2011), Akhter, (2010), Ninno and Dorosh (2000) and Mannan and Ahmed (2012) (discussed in chapter 4).

## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES**

Based on responses from two women, this section will elaborate the social and cultural context acting as a challenge towards coping. Both of these examples are related to gender based violence. This violence has close relation with cultural and social practices in the country. In Bangladeshi society dowry is a common practice in marriage. According to Huda the main reason for this practice is the patriarchal society of Bangladesh where dowry is a way of establishing the superiority of men (2006, p.253). The social and cultural practices encourage girls to get married. According to the culture parents are responsible for arranging the marriage of their daughter. An adult unmarried girl is not acceptable in the social context. Therefore, non-payment of dowry would mean that a girl remains unmarried, a situation which is undesirable in the society. The following two examples are closely related to this practice.

Pori Banu’s husband was a Muri (puffed rice) seller. But he was not interested in working. He took dowry of TK 50,000 (Approximately USD 655) in the year 1995 (when the gold price was approximately Tk 5000 for 11 gm). With the money he

built a 2 room tin shed house from where he sold Muri. He however seldom went to work. As a result he could not make enough income to maintain his family (Pori Banu and himself). He also did not permit Pori Banu to go to work. Because his income was inadequate he was forced to borrow money from time to time from neighbours, friends and local moneylenders. The debt grew and the loaners mounted pressure on him to repay the money. He was forced to sell the house and repay his debts. After selling the house Pori Banu and her husband did not have any shelter. They went to the husband's parents' house for shelter. The parents provided them accommodation. Pori Banu's father and mother in-law encouraged her husband to put pressure on Pori Banu to request money from her parents, so that the husband could start a small business.

*'I cannot forget those days when my husband started beating me for the money. My Father was a poor farmer and I couldn't ask him for dowry money. Sometimes my sister in-law and mother in-law accompanied him in the torcher. At that time I had a miscarriage of five months pregnancy due to their activity. I took loan from a micro-financing institution and gave my husband the money. Then I started working in a garment factory and repaid the loan gradually. My husband and in laws stopped torturing me and when his cancer was detected, he became more soft.'* (Interview, July 10, 2013).

In another case, Sanjida's husband was working as an electrician when she married. Before getting married, her husband had taken loans for building a tin shed. Sanjida's family, on the other hand did not pay any dowry to his family. Subsequently Sanjida's mother in-law was unhappy that her son (Sanjida's husband) refused to take dowry at the time of marriage. The husband went to work every morning while Sanjida also worked as a part time employee in the UP office. The salary she received from the UP office was low and she kept it for her personal use although the mother in-law wanted her to give the whole salary to her.

*"My salary was very low and I myself needed the money. I had taken some loan from the office for an operation that had to go for the tumour in my hand. I had to repay the money. But my mother in-law didn't want to hear all these and as I couldn't give her my money she often didn't give me food in lunch time. The kitchen was under her control and most of the days, I didn't get any lunch"* (Interview, July 20, 2013).



Photo 6.3 Sanjida's tin shed house<sup>72</sup>

The cultural and social norm of taking dowry and establishing the superiority of men works as a challenge to women's empowerment and freedom.

## AGENCY AS CAPABILITY EXPANSION

The main aim of this study was to explore, what strategies women take for coping with food shortage during shock periods and how they move from a food insecure life with the support of VGD? The study therefore concentrated on the following themes:

- (1) **Shocks or crisis in a woman's lifecycle**, understood as described and experienced by selected women. The study used their narratives and understandings to describe the crisis period.
- (2) **Problems and priorities** of the selected women and how they tried to cope with or change the situation. Problems affecting their security, opportunities and increasing vulnerability, and priority decisions for solution and who played what role in support them.
- (3) **Institutional role:** The role that VGD played in a woman's life. How the women consider VGD as a supportive institution and to what extent they felt that VGD supported and helped them to move out of their crises.

These three areas of focus were analysed through assessing real freedom, agency and *functioning* of CA.

## REAL FREEDOM AND AGENCY IN SEN'S CA

Amartya Sen's capability approach explores the capability on the assessment of *real freedom* to pursue well-being (Sen, 1992, p.39). The "*Capability to functioning*

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<sup>72</sup> Photo of Sanjida's house was captured by author.

*represents the various combinations of functioning (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functioning, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life to another"* (Sen, 1992, p. 40). This section explores the capability perspective to assess *real freedom* for acquiring food by a combination of *functioning*.

As described in the theoretical framework linking real freedom and agency, it is also important to note that there is a close link between an individual's well-being and agency success at the same time. CA argues that agency role develops an individual to become a responsible and empowered person and this does not only indicate being well but also provides the ability of accepting or refusing an act or chooses an act which she values important. Income power, economic role outside the family, ownership of property and literacy are considered variables of well-being as their contributions provide a positive force in a woman's voice and agency by empowering her.

Findings from narrative responses from women were analysed based on their agency achievement and agency freedom. The shocks in a woman's life, problems and her priorities indicate that coping with crises was basically achieved by *their freedom*, as in most of the cases the victims had to start their own income generating activities. At that point the priority was to cope with the shocks and survive by managing food. They did not consider other basic needs such as, education or clothing and so on. But, as their incomes were low they had to enrol themselves in VGD in search of a better life. Therefore, being food secure was the *valued functioning* that they aimed at while enrolling in the programme.

Enrolling in the VGD programme gave them an opportunity of being food secure by receiving the staple food rice. The programme supplied 18-20 kg of rice each month to the participants which was sufficient for the consumption by a small family (3-4 members) for a month. Thus, for the entire two years it helped to reduce the stress related to food shortage of the women. The question however still remained whether *agency achievement* or *freedom* was gained through this programme or not? Having food only for two years cannot ensure a food secure condition. The food availability and accessibility needs to be sustainable to become food secure. At this point the research focused on the other aspect of VGD which was the skill development training part.

Skill development no doubt can enable a woman to reach agency achievement and real freedom. But, it needs to be enhanced according to her capacity, education and interest or in other words it should develop the *functioning's* that she values. Based on the participant responses, the skill development training was composed of lectures explaining what they can do in order to earn income. Examples were given on how they can earn capital for a living by: rearing poultry, vegetable gardening, buying a cow and selling milk, tailoring and so on. These lectures enabled them to

gain knowledge about the opportunities they have but did not provide any real on-the-spot training for their capability development.

The programme also helped to create savings for the participants. These savings helped in starting small business enterprises for the programme beneficiaries. The respondents said that they deposited BDT 50 (USD 0.64) every month which grew to BDT 1200 (USD 15.45) at the end of the programme and which was an extremely small amount to invest.

The programme planning indicated that the mechanism was well planned to provide resources, build savings for the future and demonstrate how small investments can create new opportunities. The programme planning covered a combination of recourse provision with capability expansion objectives. In practice however, it did not help the women to develop their skills or build a reasonable saving. Although the programme was providing some savings, this was not accompanied with proper training for women to explore, employ or expand their capabilities. The training should have included realistic examples of what they can do with the amounts of savings and how they can do it and what type of investment is possible with the saved amount.

The institutional and operational capability can be also questioned. All respondents indicated that the rice rations were lower than the committed pointing to a discrepancy in distribution system. Though the supplied rice helped women to reduce stress by increasing their food consumption for two years, but the situation cannot be referred to a sustainable 'food secure' situation. To become food secure the members need to have '*Secure access to enough food all the time*' (Maxwell and Smith, 1992, p.4). The programme provided a specific food item but did not enable the women to achieve a sustainable food secure life. It is also perceived from the findings that the women did not embrace fully the new strategies introduced by the programme. They were still hanging onto their old survival strategies such as working as domestic maids, doing service work and begging. In this light therefore the findings indicated that the programme did not help in achieving sustainability in food consumption and did not build agency with regard to the success of the women.

## FROM FUNCTIONING ASPECT

CA indicates that women need to choose their *functioning* from various sets of opportunities or possibilities. These opportunities or possibilities can come from received resources. Converting the resource towards *being or doings* can enable women towards valuable *functioning*. Three types of conversion factors can play a role in converting the *functioning*. These are: personal, social and environmental conversion factors. Figure 6.1 shows a simple flow on *functioning's* by the help of conversion factors.



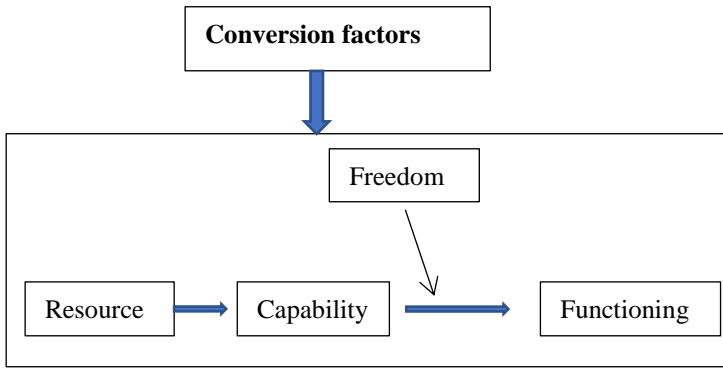


Figure 6.1 Resources towards functioning

According to the above figure supplied resources can be developed as capabilities by the conversion factors which may enable a woman to search for her valued *functioning*.

In this study only the personal conversion factors will be taken into account because all participants are in the same social programme and environment (same geographical location and social policy). The commodities (resources) provided by VGD are not the sole opportunity that they get. There are other opportunities which they received earlier and some which were ongoing during the interview period. Getting shelter, food or receiving cash (from relatives, micro-financing institutions or moneylenders) or food can be some examples. These supports can be identified as commodity spaces that enabled them towards their *functioning*. The question is whether we shall call it *functioning* or not. While the answer is in the affirmative, it can be argued as not a valuable function because it is not enough to ensure a food secure life. The women therefore need additional supportive packages. It is at this point that questions regarding VGD's claim to be a food security social protection programme can be raised. There is no doubt that the supplied commodity helps the women at the immediate stage to increase their food consumption during shock periods but it does not help them to develop sustainability of food security.

Another observation from the findings shows that the participant's individual personal capabilities or skills which they had before joining VGD, such as sewing skills, working ability and planning capacity, made them survive in their shock situation. VGD did not help to enhance their existing skills.

There were also examples of women who were working to earn an income with their skills during participation in VGD. It seems therefore that the provided resources of VGD were able to contribute as a conversion factor for a short period

but not in the long term. The rice provided by the programme was only providing support for two years which made the family access their staple food. However, this resource did not contribute to a sustainable food secure life. Moreover, the provided training was only a short lecture programme. It was not possible for illiterate women in the programme to engage in small business enterprises without clear and structured training. The cash which was provided after the end of the programme was such a small amount not even appropriate for any kind of small investment. The women had to explore their own capabilities for their *functioning* and were continuing with those strategies they encountered before and during the programme as well as after completion.

### **AGENCY, FREEDOM AND FUNCTIONING PERSPECTIVES IN NUSSBAUM'S CA**

Analyzing the agency and freedom perspective based on Nussbaum's CA should only focus on the capabilities of women and their valued *functioning's* as Nussbaum describes: *One set of distinctions prominently used by Sen is absent in my own version of the capabilities approach. This is the distinction between well-being and agency, which, together with the distinction between freedom and achievement, structures much of his recent writing about capabilities. I agree with Sen that the concepts introduced by these distinctions are important: but I believe that all the important distinctions can be captured as aspects of the capability/functioning distinction* (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 14).

The *functioning* aspect has been analysed according to Sen's approach in the previous section. This section will concentrate on women's agency. This study shows that only depending on *functioning* and capability (ignoring the agency) may reduce the scope of analysis. David Crocker also asserts "*Nussbaum's concepts of practical reason and control are both less robust and less defensible than Sen's ideal of agency*" (Crocker, 2008, p. 132). The agency achievement and freedom concept of Sen offers the opportunity to analyse the agency role of women towards expanding her empowerment and capability set.

According to Nussbaum, the strength of her CA is the development of central human capabilities list endorsing ten human capabilities. Observing these human capabilities indicates that she also has considered an agency perspective in the list. For example, two capabilities *affiliation* and *control over one's environment*, are examples where agency has been considered.

*Affiliation* under the list expresses "*being able to live with and towards others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another*" (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-42). This affiliation component clearly indicates the importance of women to act as agents and the need of freedom seen as showing concern for others and being engaged in social interactions. These are not possible without real freedom.

The next component *control over one's environment* is explained as “A: *Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association.*

B. *Material: Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relation-ships of mutual recognition with other workers*” (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41-42).

This concept also shows a clear indication of the freedom and agency roles of women that she considers as an essential component of capability. Therefore, agency and real freedom are also considered from a different dimension in her approach.

Furthermore, Nussbaum claims that her, “*capabilities approach is fully universal: the capabilities in question are important for each and every citizen, in each and every nation, and each is to be treated as an end. Women in developing nations are important to the project in two ways: as people who suffer pervasively from acute capability failure, and also as people whose situation provides an interesting test of this and other approaches, showing us the problems they solve or fail to solve*” (Nussbaum, 2000, p.6) and therefore advises that states should enclose the central human capabilities in their constitutions. Therefore, concentrating on agency and freedom, this part of the analysis focused on the two capabilities above (*Affiliation and control over one's environment*) and further analysed whether the constitution provided these capabilities to the women in Bangladesh or not.

VGD can be described as an initiative of the state to ensure the provision of basic necessities, such as food for the vulnerable mentioned in Article 15 of the constitution of Bangladesh.<sup>73</sup> Observing Article 10, 19(1), (2) and 28, gives the right of equality and participation and interaction in all spheres of life which is associated with the *affiliation* component in the list.<sup>74, 75, 76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Article 15 “It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens- (a) the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care”.

<sup>74</sup> Article 10, “Participation of women in national life- Steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life”

The other component in the list *control over one's environment* is also incorporated by ensuring free speech, equal opportunity in employment and property rights as enshrined in article 15(b) , 36, 39 and 42.<sup>77, 78, 79, 80</sup>

It is therefore clear that the objective of the VGD programme was in tandem with the (government's) responsibility of providing basic necessities to the vulnerable. The programme was designed to develop agency and expand capabilities set for the women. It is however hard to identify the agency role or increase in empowerment for the longer term through the programme due to its weak operational methods or in other words lack of institutional capabilities. Institutionally providing some commodities to expand capability set, it can be argued, was not an effective means of expanding the capabilities of women.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study intended to examine the strategies of women for coping with food shortage during shock periods and moving towards food security through the support of VGD. The study analysed the case of 23 women participating in the VGD programme of the Bangladesh government. The government has identified this (VGD) poverty reduction safety net as a provider of food security ensuring

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<sup>75</sup> Article 19, “(1) The State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens. (2) The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic”

<sup>76</sup> Article 28 “(2) Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life”.

<sup>77</sup> Article 15 “(b) *the right to work, that is the right to guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage having regard to the quantity and quality of work;*

*(c) the right to reasonable rest, recreation and leisure; and the right to social security, that is to say to public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases’.*

<sup>78</sup> Article 36 *Freedom of movement - .....every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh*

<sup>79</sup> Article 39 *Freedom of thought and conscience, and speech ensuring freedom of speech*

<sup>80</sup> Article 42 *Rights to property .....every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, transfer or otherwise dispose of property”.*

(Ministry of law, justice and parliamentary affairs (2010) *The constitution of peoples republic of Bangladesh*. Available at [http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/pdf\\_part.php?id=367](http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/pdf_part.php?id=367))

programme. The programme targets the deprived women of the society who have faced severe shocks in their lifecycle and struggle to achieve their basic need food for survival. The selected women were recognised as deprived and the programme was identified as food security ensuring. To find the coping strategies and pathways of moving out from food insecurity the study targeted the time period from when the women experienced the shock. It first identified the shock types in a woman's life which affected her food security status. Secondly, to observe the pathways towards a food secure status the research intended to view the role of VGD in the life of the targeted women. It then proceeded to discover the relation of commodities (provided by the antipoverty programme) and the *functioning* of the participants towards ensuring a food secure life.

From the literature it was found that the women take mainly two styles of coping: problem focused and the emotionally focused coping (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, p. 223-224). This study indicated that in severe shock situations women attempt to employ both problem and emotionally focused coping styles. The findings also indicated that these women went for active coping strategy first to improve their food insecure situation and minimise their present problems. Later they went for the restriction where they waited for an appropriate opportunity and at last they took social support for them to cope.

This study identified the unexpected shock situations which the women went through. According to the responses from the participants the main shocks that brought them in deprived situations economically and socially were mainly death of the principal income earner in the family, illness of a family member, and loss of job. Besides, the other occurrences were unemployed husbands, abandonment by the husbands and retarded children in the family. To cope with the shocks women adopted their own coping mechanisms to generate some income and acquire food. Enrolling VGD was also a mechanism of coping with food shortage.

This enrolment gave them an opportunity of being food secure by providing their staple food 'rice'. The programme supplied participants' with rice each month which was sufficient for the consumption by a small family (3-4 members) for a month. Thus, for the entire two years it helped to reduce the stress related to food shortage of the women. Moreover, the programme gave skills development lectures which provided information and ways of generating basic income and created some savings for small investments in the future. The programme planning indicated that the mechanism is well planned as it provides resource, builds some savings for the future and demonstrated how to make small investments. The research intended to explore the effect of this programme from the participating women's view by exploring the coping strategies of the women during their crisis period.

The crisis coping strategies were first explored to understand women's existing capabilities which they employed for their survival. The VGD mechanism and

participants view regarding the programme enabled this research to discover whether the programme expanded their capabilities or not.

The opinions of the women regarding the programme indicated some valuable inputs. The discrepancy in distribution was clear according to statements from the participants. It meant that if the rice was distributed in committed amounts (30 kg) it would be enough for more than a three to four member family. The non-specified rice distribution data also shows lacking in management capacity. The programme provides some saving opportunities but without proper training a woman cannot explore or employ her capabilities. It should include more skill knowledge and practical training as a realistic example of what they can do with the amount of saving they have and how they can do it (what type of investment is possible with the saved amount).

It is well recognised that the supplied resource increases women's food consumption for two years. However this cannot be described as leading to sustainability in food security. The programme provided a specific food item but did not enable the women achieve a sustainable food secure life. It is also perceived from the findings that the women did not quit their previous livelihood strategies which they themselves adopted for coping in their shock situations. They were still managing their needs with support of those individual strategies that they adopted during their crisis times.

This analysis sought to examine the coping strategies of deprived women in ensuring food security and explore the role of VGD in ensuring food security for women. While going through crises the study found that women depended on more or less the same strategies to cope with food shortage and reduce their problems. The poverty reduction programme VGD is no doubt a great support in crisis times but it could be much more effective and bring sustainable change in the participant's life if there was proper management and some skill developing practical trainings. The skill developing trainings can work as conversion factors towards better *functioning* of women. In a developing country like Bangladesh where the government cannot support its huge population with employment opportunities and enough food, it is important to develop policies with a focus on exploring and enabling the capabilities of the citizens. But, this objective can only be fulfilled if the institutions have the capacities for operating the programmes in a successful manner. The paper therefore highlights the need for enhancing institutional capacities for operationalising antipoverty programmes according to their objective and planning.

# **CHAPTER 7. FINANCING SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR POVERTY REDUCTION: A STUDY OF MICRO-FINANCING AND MICROENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH<sup>81</sup>**

## **ABSTRACT**

Micro-financing is widely perceived to contribute towards social innovation for poverty reduction. This paper examines the Challenging Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) programme implemented by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) between 2002 and 2007 which used an innovative approach to micro-financing by transferring assets rather than cash to ultra-poor women headed households. The paper examines two issues: (i) the impact of micro-financing through asset transfer instead of cash on social innovation and its impact on poverty reduction (ii) the factors that contributed to positive or negative impact on the economic conditions and poverty levels of the participant households and the trajectories of changes experienced by the success and failure cases. The paper employed survey data from twenty one programme participants and eight in-depth interviews among these households. The study found that participants who demonstrated proper planning, hard work, and personal interest in the enterprise have, through micro-financing, witnessed improved quality of life and poverty reduction, while lack of motivation, absence of proper planning, and certain social barriers resulted in failure. The study makes two major contributions: (i) it fills a gap in the literature on social innovation of micro-financing indicating how it helps ultra-poor households to graduate out of poverty (ii) it provides policy alternatives for designing appropriate micro-financing programmes for ultra-poor which can

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contribute in poverty reduction through social innovation not only in Bangladesh but also in other developing countries.

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has come a long way since it was considered as a bottomless basket three decades ago, partly due to pioneering developments in micro-financing which contributed towards social innovation and significant poverty reduction. This was globally recognised when the ‘Nobel Peace Award 2006’ was given jointly to Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank for their pioneering work towards developing micro-financing in Bangladesh. Although the country has made significant progress, the poverty rate is still high (BBS, 2010). In order to achieve the committed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2015, the development process of the country must strive towards rapidly expanding employment creation opportunities. Financing entrepreneurs to develop their own businesses can facilitate employment creation and industrial growth. Developing the small, medium, and microenterprises (SMME) sector through financial support can be a tool for this as it is difficult for the SMMEs to have the same level of access to banks and other financing organisations compared to the large enterprises. In this situation, micro-financing is considered to be one of the innovative ways of filling this gap, as it makes it possible for the deprived households to access finance to run microenterprises and achieve a flow of earnings. It helps to generate opportunities for self-employment and empowers poor people and communities. In other words, micro-financing helps to bring about social innovation by creating social and economic values such as generating more income, empowering particularly the women, and reducing poverty among the poor communities.

Various organisations in Bangladesh have adopted different types of micro-financing programmes to support the poor. The schemes are no doubt supportive but often they are not accessible to the ultra-poor. To achieve meaningful poverty reduction it is imperative that this group is targeted and helped to make a sustainable earning. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is a leading nongovernmental organisation and is also one of the largest in dealing with microcredit in the country. BRAC initiated the micro-financing programme called Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) in 2002 with the main goal being to increase the ability of the ultra-poor socially and economically. CFPR followed a different approach towards micro-financing, that is, asset transfer instead of cash funding to help set up microenterprises. The programme started in 2002 and subsequently different studies have looked into different components of the programme and their impact. Studies were conducted to explore the differences between the participant and non-participant households of the CFPR programme (Matin and Walker, 2004, Haseen, 2006, Rabbani et al, 2006). The findings explored major differences between these groups of household in a range of



indicators. That is, it found increase in income, asset holding, savings and food security in the case of CFPR programme participants compared to non-participants after three years of programme implementation. Although these studies concluded that there was general improvement among most of the CFPR programme participating women, they also found that there were participant households which did not show significant positive outcomes. If so, what were the causes for such failures? This caught our attention. Furthermore, we found that there was little attention paid to understanding the differences among trajectories of changes or no change experienced by both the successful and unsuccessful members after undergoing the CFPR programme. This made us to focus our study only on the CFPR participant households and investigate the following research questions: 1. how did the special approach of micro-financing through asset transfer instead of cash perform as a tool of promoting social innovation to reduce poverty in the selected households of the CFPR micro-financing programme? 2. What were the reasons or factors that contributed to either positive impact or little or no impact on the economic conditions of the households participating in the CFPR micro-financing programme? For this, we used primary data gathered from a survey of twenty one programme participants as well as in-depth interviews with eight of these households, which included both successful and not so successful cases.

Our study makes two major contributions: (i) it fills a gap in the literature on micro-financing of the ultra-poor households to foster social innovation (ii) the findings have useful policy implications for designing appropriate micro-financing programmes that can produce high success rates in transforming the livelihoods of ultra-poor through social innovation not only in Bangladesh but also in other developing countries.

## LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This section provides a literature review on three areas: social innovation and micro-financing, poverty reduction through micro-financing along with the growth of micro-financing in Bangladesh, and previous studies on the impact of the CFPR programme in Bangladesh.

### SOCIAL INNOVATION AND MICROFINANCING

Jim Phills (2009) defines social innovation as *‘any novel and useful solution to a social need or problem, that is better than existing approaches (i.e., more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just) and for which the value created (benefits) accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals’*. In other words, all

‘innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social’ are seen as social innovations (Phills in Mulgan, 2006, p.145). Jim Phills (2009) sees microfinance and fair trade products as examples of social innovation. Historically, civil society took the lead in promoting social innovations such as neighbourhood nurseries and neighbourhood wardens, holistic health care and hospices, microcredit and consumer cooperatives, the fair trade movement, zero-carbon housing developments and community wind farms, and online self-help health groups (Mulgan, 2006, p.146). Social innovation promotes cooperation among citizens, democratic decision-making, social justice, a good society and social cohesion and empowers citizens. In other words, social innovation aims to improve the living conditions of individuals and communities (Harrisson et al., 2009).

*“As a form of finance, microfinance’s ‘distinctiveness rests with the social value it creates”* and it has been globally recognised as an investment innovation that helps to leverage economic and social values (Dash, 2009, p.89). The Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, the organisation of international donors who support microfinance, views microfinance as *“a powerful tool to fight poverty”* that can help poor people to increase their income, assets and the standard of living (Copestake, 2007, p. 1721). The World Bank and other mainstream development agencies also have recognised the propensity of microfinance programmes to mobilise social capital within communities (Rankin, 2002), and especially *“when properly designed, they can make an important contribution to women’s empowerment”* (Cheston and Kuhn, 2002, p. 5). It is argued that microfinance helps to mobilise social capital for poverty reduction where both the market and the state have failed (Ito, 2003, p. 323).

## **POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH MICROFINANCING AND ITS EVOLUTION IN BANGLADESH**

To achieve the MDGs, Bangladesh needs to witness major improvements in the areas of reducing poverty, supporting education for children, physical conditions of women and children, and empowering women. Mainly, to reduce poverty the country has been developing micro entrepreneurship through micro-financing. Research indicates that micro-financing has proved to help the programme participants to gain higher income, increased consumption and get out of poverty both in Bangladesh (e.g. Khandker and Samad, 2013; Islam, 2011; Dunford, 2006; Yunus, 1997) and in other countries (e.g. Imai et al., 2012; Imai et al., 2010; Boonperm et al., 2009). However, there are also arguments that the outcome will be effective only if this financial aid can reach the ultra-poor group on a continuous basis by targeting their specific needs in significant volume and range (e.g. Hermes and Lensink, 2007; Rogaly, 1996; Littlefield et al., 2003; Latiffee, 2003). Studies

have also showed the effectiveness of specially targeted micro-financing programmes in helping the poor to increase their income and assets (Khandker et al., 2010; Emran et al., 2009). Therefore, some researchers favoured strong policy intervention to assist the SME sector, as SMEs foster entrepreneurship, create job opportunities and generate higher earnings, particularly for the deprived people with low income (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Momtazuddin, 2003), and especially by lending money to them at an appropriate, affordable and low interest rate (Geneva Trade and Development Forum 2008 ; Mukras, 2003). Halder (2012) and Kimabo (2005) argued that for an effective support to stimulate the development of the SME sector it is necessary to identify the barriers of growth faced by these micro enterprises.

The poor in Bangladesh are financed by microcredit programmes offered by various organisations. Studies have found that these micro-financing organisations have played an important role in improving the economic conditions and lifestyle of the poor significantly by providing them with microcredit (e.g. Ahmed, 2010; Hossain and Knight, 2008), as it promotes creation of entrepreneurship and new business start-ups which can generate income and lead to poverty reduction, increased food consumption and social well-being. The benefits from microfinance can therefore be viewed socially and economically (Morduch and Haley, 2002; Honohan, 2004). Haque (2008) argued that micro-financing programmes boosted the capacity of the participating households in managing their financial needs.

Since independence, Bangladesh initiated a number of anti-poverty programmes and a decade or so later the policy makers realised that to make a significant impact on poverty reduction they need to come up with policy measures that will improve the capital and productivity of the poor in a sustained way. As a result, microcredit programmes were initiated in the 1980s (Khandker, 1998).

The present ongoing poverty reduction programmes have been categorised as social protection and social empowerment programmes (Ministry of Finance, 2014). The microcredit or micro-financing programmes are included in the category of social empowerment which is aimed at creating employment opportunities or developing self-employment through entrepreneurship. Additionally there are other anti-poverty seasonal programmes which support the poor during seasonal disaster and vulnerable situations and therefore are not supposed to make a sustainable change in the income and lifestyle of the poor. The micro-financing programmes in Bangladesh are executed mainly by nongovernmental organisations, except some specific projects that operate under ministries. There are thousands of micro-financing institutions which are operating special programmes. The leading NGOs engaged in micro-financing are Grameen Bank, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Association of Social Advancement (ASA). Grameen Bank provides almost 211 types of services which include loans and human

resources development related services. BRAC started operating since 1974 and is the largest non-governmental micro-financing institution in Bangladesh. It gives equal weight to both training the borrowers on various income generating activities and providing them with loans. BRAC gives not only loans, but also has projects which provide only asset instead of cash to the beneficiaries. ASA was started in 1978 and mainly provides loans to small business and income generating activities by poor women (Abed, 2000).

It has been observed by various scholars that microcredit programmes did help to lessen a number of factors that contribute to poverty (Baye, 2013, Chowdhury et al, 2005, Zaman, 1999, Khandker, 1998, Weiss et al 2005). However, poverty increases when the poor borrow money beyond their capacities. This capacity may be their financial capability or their working capability. If the microcredit is used for income generating activities and actions which create returns that are more than the amount of the loan repayable, then the poverty level is likely to be reduced. However, if the activity does not create such an opportunity, then there is less likelihood of poverty reduction. In this case the loan repayment burden may reduce the consumption and income of the participant household and will make little or no impact on poverty reduction. Sometimes credits are not used in investment activities. A poor person takes the microcredit and may use it for a non-productive purpose such as repairing their house, repaying an existing loan or to meet a social obligation. In such cases the micro-financing cannot contribute towards reducing poverty (Zaman, 1999). On the other hand if the poor person uses the micro credit to build a microenterprise, this can lead to poverty reduction through generation of new income.

### **IMPACT OF CFPR MICRO-FINANCING PROGRAMME**

The largest microcredit providers in Bangladesh are BRAC and Grameen Foundation. Our case study, the BRAC's CFPR programme, utilised the information on poverty to recognise and select the ultra-poor participating households. Researchers found significant differences between the poor and the ultra-poor who were differentiated from the poor group by wealth ranking (Matin and Halder, 2004). The CFPR programme specifically targeted the ultra-poor households in selected districts. The selection method was multi-staged and involved four steps: (i) developing relationship with potential participant (ii) Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) meeting (iii) examining and initial selection (iv) and final selection. Poor housing was also one of the selection criteria of the project. The other factors for selection were households owning less than 10 decimal lands (1 decimal land = 436 sq. feet), working (school aged) children and women working out of their house (Matin and Halder, 2004).

Research was conducted using samples of ultra-poor members (households) which were participating in the CFPR programme for over a period of 18 months. The researchers examined how far the participant households could improve their livelihood. They employed quantitative analysis and case studies and found that lifestyles of the members had improved significantly. They showed increased ability to handle future financial crisis, with improved level of savings. Other areas of improvements included land ownership, frequency in taking meals, and extra activities for generating income (Matin and Walker, 2004). Assessment of the well-being measures indicated positive changes in the lifestyle of the participating households mainly due to opportunities created by the CFPR programme for the members to save some cash and also their improved food intake (Matin and Haldar, 2004; Haseen, 2006). The food and calorie intakes were not sufficient in 2002 among both (1) the ultra-poor members selected to participate in the CFPR programme and (2) households that were not selected for the programme. After two years (in 2004) it was observed that the programme operation had led to a general improvement in calorie and food intake (both qualitatively and quantitatively) among the participant member households (Haseen, 2006).

After completion of the programme the impact studies indicated significant improvement in the lifestyle (both social and financial) of the programme participants and concluded that the CFPR project had considerably enhanced the lives of the ultra-poor by enabling them to help themselves (Rabbani et al., 2006). It was also observed that the participating women's involvement in the income generating activities, their self-interest, and training condition had a direct relationship with the level of knowledge retention (Barua and Sulaiman, 2007). Positive changes were identified on the livelihood of participants regarding increased self-employment (farms) for both male and female family members, and a rise in income source and per capita income (Narayan et al., 2009, 2010; Bandiere et al., 2011). The impact of the programme from the community perspective recommended that *“intervention design for the poorest has to be far more comprehensive including promotional, protective and transformative strategies to make a real dent on extreme poverty”* (Sulaiman and Matin, 2006, p. 1).

To sum up, previous studies on the impact of the CFPR micro-financing programme on its participating member households observed significant improvements in terms of savings, food intake, new income generation, and ability to face future crisis. However, some important aspects of the programme were ignored by these studies: (i) the role of the special approach to micro-financing in reducing poverty, that is, asset transfer instead of cash (ii) the factors that contributed to failures among the CFPR members, that is, little or no impact on their economic conditions and (iii) the trajectory of socio-economic changes experienced by the member households since they started participating in the CFPR programme. Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap in the literature by

investigating these issues using a survey of twenty one programme participants and in depth case studies of eight households that participated in the CFPR programme.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The main concepts employed in this study include micro-financing, social innovation, the ultra-poor and poverty reduction. Drawing from the literature review in Section 2, we present a conceptual framework linking micro-financing, target social groups, social innovation and poverty reduction. We have also identified some indicators such as income change, capacity for savings, food consumption, child education and health for measuring poverty reduction which will be applied to analyse the data from sample households. These are illustrated by Figure 7.1.

Amartya Sen proposes that “*social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functioning they value*” (Alkair, 2002, p 19). Sen’s framework of the capability approach distinguishes utility, human capability or *functioning* and commodities. The major difference between one’s capacity and capability is that capacity is an existing ability whereas capabilities are the inner potentials which come out and can be improved by techniques such as learning, training, etc. Sen’s capability approach introduces a bridge between the persons earning and his ability to convert the earning into *functioning* (Sen, 1985). This is illustrated by Figure 7.2. We adapt Sen’s capability approach to poverty reduction and modify it by identifying and including the capabilities of the programme participants as factors that could enhance ‘*functioning*’ and lead them towards their well-being and graduate out of poverty. On the other hand, lack of capabilities of the programme participants is likely to hamper the *functioning* which may not lead towards a positive outcome towards poverty reduction. This is illustrated by Figure 7.3. Therefore, we aim to trace and try to explain the pathways of getting out of the poverty trap using an analytical framework which combines the capabilities and *functioning* of the participant households in utilizing the assets received from the CFPR programme to graduate out of poverty. This is illustrated by Figure 7.4.

Figure 1: Microfinancing, Social Innovation & Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework

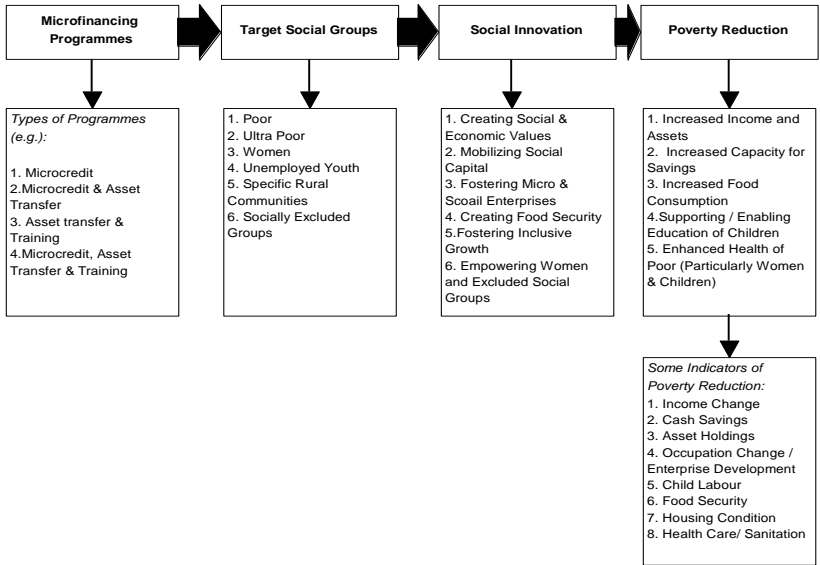
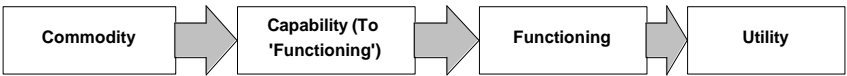


Figure 7.1 Micro-financing, social innovation and poverty reduction: A conceptual framework (Figure 1 in original paper)

(Developed by authors)

Figure 2: Amartya Sen's Framework of Capability Approach Towards Poverty Reduction



Source: Clark (2006).

Figure 7. 2 Amartya Sen's frame work on capability approach towards poverty reduction (Figure 2 in original paper)

Source: (Clark, 2006, p.3)

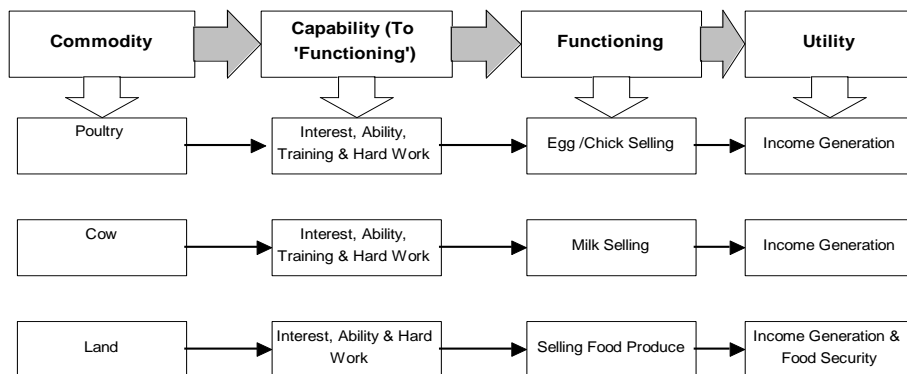
**Figure 3: Modified Framework of Capability Approach Towards Poverty Reduction**

Figure 7.3 Modified framework of capability approach towards poverty reduction (Figure 3 in original paper)

(Developed by authors)



Figure 4: Analytical Framework for CFPR Microfinancing Programme

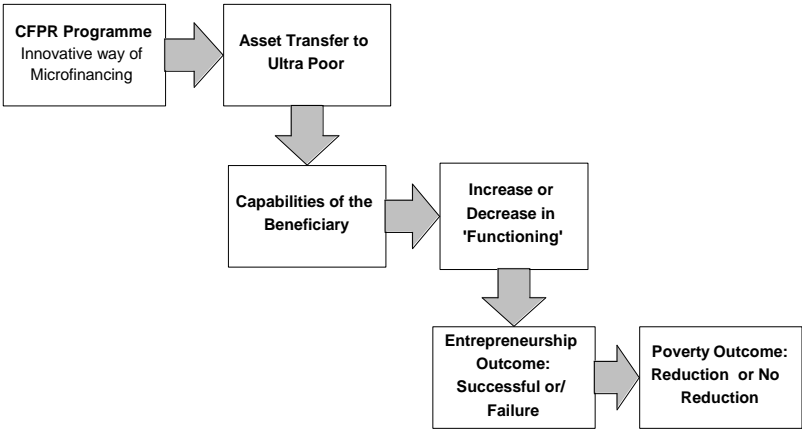


Figure 7. 4 Analytical framework of CFPR micro-financing programme (Figure 4 in original paper)

(Developed by authors)

We analyse the data gathered from the sample households by combining and integrating the frameworks illustrated by Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Study area and data collection

The study area was a sub district Rangpur Sadar located in the northern part of Bangladesh where BRAC operated CFPR programme. Rangpur Sadar is located in the district Rangpur 296 kilometres from the capital Dhaka. This part of the country is extremely vulnerable to seasonal hunger (Khandker and Mahmud, 2012).

This research was qualitative in nature. Both interview and observations were done to explore the livelihood of participating households. Interviews of 21 participants were based on a semi structured questionnaire (Appendix 3). This interview collected responses of the women representing the household. In addition 8 among these 21 households were selected randomly for observation. Observation included collection of oral historical accounts of the household members and observing their lifestyle. That is, we employed multi research methods such as direct observation,

questionnaire survey, interviews, and oral history methods to collect descriptive data from primary sources and also used secondary data from documents and texts. This technique helped to obtain results that were believed to be more robust and reliable than that obtained through a single research method. The combination of analysing texts, concepts, with multiple observation and questionnaire survey, and interview helped to overcome the limitations which would have otherwise arisen from a single method and helped to study more detail (Cohen and Manion, 2000; Altrichter et al., 2008) as well as cross checking the results (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003).

To investigate the research questions, twenty one CFPR participant households including both successful and less successful cases from five villages in Rangpur district (one of the poorest districts in the country) were selected purposively and surveyed using questionnaire. In addition, oral history accounts were gathered through in depth interviews and observation from eight of these twenty one households. The questionnaire survey, interviews and direct observations were undertaken during July, 2010. Collecting information after 3 years of programme completion gave an opportunity to explore the livelihood of CFPR participating households after completing the programme.

The observation and interviews were mainly aimed at finding out how the CFPR micro-financing through asset transfer was acting as a tool of poverty reduction and social innovation. We also sought to find out how the programme participants were utilizing the provided assets with their capabilities towards achieving sustainable development in their life style. The in depth interviews were designed to trace the trajectories of changes (both positive and negative) experienced by the households since they started participating in the CFPR micro-financing programme. Apart from the primary data gathered through questionnaire survey and interviews, we also used secondary data from the information accrued from the panel data set of these programme participants from the research division of BRAC.

## **MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CFPR PROGRAMME**

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) started the programme called “*Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR/TUP)*” in 2002. The programme was initiated particularly to reach the ultra-poor, as it was increasingly realised that most of the micro-financing programmes had failed to reach this group. There are many programmes which are providing credit or food to the poor. BRAC recognised that providing the poor with cash may help them in the short term, but it cannot ensure sustainable income generation (BRAC, 2009). This drove BRAC to initiate the CFPR programme by identifying

the ultra-poor group and providing them micro-financing (transfer of asset not cash) to develop self-employment. The ultra-poor households were selected by the programme using five major criteria: (i) household that is dependent upon female domestic work or begging as income source (ii) household owning less than 10 decimals of land (iii) household with no active adult male member (iv) household with children of school going age working to earn money and (v) household not in possession of productive assets. In addition, the households which were members of any other micro-financing programme or government project were excluded (BRAC, 2013). The thrust of the CFPR programme was on helping the selected ultra-poor households to develop their own microenterprises. The main condition of asset transfer depended on the particular household's selection criteria, which mainly involved weekly monitoring of the progress made. The beneficiary households were not required to repay, as the assets were provided through foreign donations provided to combat poverty.<sup>82</sup>

Table 7. 1 Support package of CFPR provided to participants

Component	Support received	Duration of support
Asset Transfer	Assets for enterprise e.g. cow, goat, poultry, nursery, non-firm assets etc.	Provided one time in the beginning
Enterprise Development Training	Class room orientation and training  Hands on training by enterprise management and technical supervision.	Three to five days training before asset transfer  Two years
Support for Enterprise	All inputs required to maintain the enterprise	The first cycle of enterprise
Weekly Stipend	Tk70 (US\$ 0.90)	(Enterprise specific) Until income start from enterprise

<sup>82</sup> The CFPR program was mainly funded by foreign donors such as the Australian Agency for International Development (Aus AID) and the Department for International Development (DFID). The funding was used by BRAC to design and implement programmes for social innovation and poverty alleviation. Therefore, generally the programme participants did not have to repay. The assets were transferred to the recipients to develop microenterprises and generate income to combat poverty.

Health Care Support	Free medical treatment of the animals.	Two years
	Training to build awareness	Two years
	Regular visit of health volunteers for monitoring preventive diseases	
Social Development	Awareness raising training	Two years
Mobilisation of Local Elite for Support	Community supports-material, information, and guidance.	Two years and continuous
<b>Source: BRAC (2009). <i>Research Monograph Series</i> (Series no.39, p-7). Dhaka: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.</b>		

The first task was to help them choose the appropriate enterprise for the beneficiaries. For this, factors such as past work experience, ability to run an enterprise, management skills of the participant, and social, environmental and market related factors were taken into account. The enterprise was finally selected through discussion with the beneficiary, after exploring his/her interests. Most programme participants were interested in poultry and livestock rearing, and some showed interest in vegetable growing. The next step was to provide the programme participants with training on the enterprise development (related to their interest). After the training, appropriate assets were transferred to each member to develop their enterprises.<sup>83</sup> The assets were transferred within a month of completing the training. After transferring the assets the programme provided necessary support to maintain the assets. Weekly monitoring and advice was provided. A small amount of stipend per week was also provided depending on the type of enterprise. The transferred assets' value was on average TK 6000 (about US\$ 80). The average weekly stipend was Tk 70 (US\$ 0.90). Health care support towards the animals was also provided. Table 7.1 shows the supporting packages provided towards the programme participants. The programme was administered for five years and it ended in 2007. The supporting packages were provided for two years.

<sup>83</sup> Different types of assets included: (i) one cow from which the household can earn by selling milk (ii) a set of chickens (normally 36) to develop poultry farm from which the household can earn by selling eggs and raising and selling chicks (iii) 3 goats (iv) a small piece of land for developing a nursery (v) 5 mounds (5\*37.3=186.5 kg) of paddy to produce rice and sell it in the market. On average the value of assets were about 6,000 Bangladeshi Taka 6000 (about US\$80).

## **DATA AND ANALYSIS**

The first part of this section analyses the changes in livelihood of sample participants of CFPR programme and the second part analyses the trajectories of socio economic changes (positive and negative) experienced by the participants leading to success or failure and the reasons or factors contributing to success or failure.

The first research objective was to explore how the CFPR programme performed as a tool of reducing poverty in the participant households. In order to arrive at this the data gathered through a questionnaire survey (Appendix 3) of twenty beneficiary households (including both success and failure cases) were used. The questionnaire covered questions related to the factors of poverty. Household income was used as the main indicator to determine a household as a success or failure.

The second research objective was to find out the reasons or factors that contributed to either positive impact or little or no impact on the socio economic conditions of the households participating in the CFPR programme. This was explored by collecting the oral historic accounts from the households about the pathway of socio-economic change in their livelihood from the year 2002 to 2010. The well-being and the ill-being accounts helped to identify some important key factors that contributed positively or negatively towards reducing poverty.

The socio-economic changes in a participant household of the programme were examined by gathering data from the main participating women of each respondent household. This was done through a questionnaire survey of twenty one women and gathering detailed oral histories from eight among them. The questionnaire and interviews were designed to explore the lifestyle of the households prior to participating in the programme, that is, at the beginning of the programme (2002), information on the livelihood at the end of the programme (2007), and the situation of the household in 2010.

## **IMPACT OF CFPR PROGRAMME ON REDUCING POVERTY**

Most of the programme participants' own perception of poverty reduction and improved livelihood was linked to: cash savings, present asset, income, occupation, housing and sanitary condition. Therefore, these indicators were included among

others to measure graduation from poverty. Table 7.2 also highlights the major findings of our study. The findings under each indicator are discussed below.

### Income Change

The income data for three different phases was collected (2002, 2007, and 2010). The data showed that there was a clear positive impact of the programme on participant's income. A high rate of sustained improvement in the income (57 per cent) was observed. Although some programme participants did not experience sustained improvement (33.3 per cent), they witnessed improvement during the first three years. The rate of failure was low.

### Occupation Change

The data on occupations of the household members including the main participating women were gathered to trace the changes over the three phases. This information was collected from the main programme participants of the households and crosschecked with other villagers. It was observed that begging as the main occupation had gradually disappeared after participation in the CFPR programme. At the beginning of the programme, for 55 per cent of the households, the main occupation was working as a day-wage labourer. At the end of the programme period (2007) this dropped to 35 per cent. Running a small poultry rearing firm or cow rearing firm was the main occupation for 25 per cent of members. These occupations formed the second income source for 30 per cent of the programme participants in. It was noticeable that the cow and poultry rearing became an occupation (both main and supporting) for 55 per cent of participant households during the whole programme period. This figure decreased to 30 per cent in 2010, that is, 3 years after completion of the programme. This shift appears to be due to the emergence of a new occupation 'own agriculture' (25 per cent). The findings suggest that some of the households were able to purchase land to do their farming 'own agriculture' a new occupation for them.

### Child Labour

Presence of child labour is a major indicator of poverty and it amounted to 33.33 per cent among the participating households at the beginning of the programme in 2002. It was observed that this reduced gradually and reached 4.76 per cent by 2010. This major improvement among the participant households appears to be due to significant growth in their income and also because of the awareness created against child employment during the training and awareness building activities by the CFPR programme.

## Food Consumption

This is the key concern for poor countries like Bangladesh. To reduce the poverty levels both the government and non-government agencies make efforts to improve food consumption. Our data showed that the food consumption level had increased significantly by 2010. In 2002, when the programme started, all selected households were experiencing deficiency in food consumption constantly. By 2007, at the end of the programme implementation, it was clearly noticeable that the situation became better. During this period the severe food deficiency (i.e. deficit of more than once or twice in a week) was much less than that of 2002. But in the year 2010, it was evident that the overall food consumption had increased. This is a major positive impact of the CFPR programme on poverty.<sup>84</sup>

## Drinking Water

It was observed that even before participating in the CFPR programme all the programme participants (100 per cent of sampled respondents) had access to pure water for their cooking and drinking purpose. This was possible because of the tube well projects (water supplying source) implemented by non-governmental organisations mainly supported by foreign donor agencies. The role of the CFPR programme in this area was not critical.

## Housing Condition

To assess the change in housing condition of the member participants we analysed based on total rooms in the houses and the availability of a separate kitchen. All the programme participants (100 per cent of sampled respondents) who had to share rooms before starting the programme had managed to build their own rooms with separate kitchens by 2010, which indicates a significant improvement in their economic condition.

## Toilet Facility

Almost all the programme participants used unhygienic toilet facilities before participating in the CFPR programme in 2002. By the end of the programme about 85 per cent of them had hygienic toilet facilities. This change appears to be mainly due to the income generated by the programme and also the awareness created by its initiatives.

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<sup>84</sup> See questionnaire in Appendix 3

### Cash Savings

In the beginning of the programme, all the selected households had no cash savings at all. By 2010 most of the households had financial savings. It appears that the programme helped them to develop cash saving culture and practice which increased in all the cases. Developing a saving habit was a mandatory component of the programme and the programme participants had to save money during the programme operation. The programme participants had to deposit amount and started saving cash at the local area offices. Due to this compulsory saving rule, the participants had savings at the end of the programme.

### Asset Holdings

A comparison of the asset holdings of the participants between pre and post programme participation showed an increase in the ownership of cow and poultry. Between 2002 and 2010 the cow ownership increased from 5 to 75 per cent. The poultry and goat ownership also increased from 40 to 80 per cent. The programme was designed to reduce poverty among its ultra-poor programme participants by transferring assets. The assets were mainly poultry and livestock. The programme participants were provided with training which enabled them to develop skills in poultry and animal rearing. This system of asset transfer along with training appears to have helped the participants to develop microenterprises for income generation.

### Self-Perception on Food Availability

The data related to the programme participants' perception on food security showed that deficiency in food consumption had declined from 85.71 to 29 per cent (between 2002 and 2010). Although there is still deficiency in food consumption (14.29 per cent) among the participant households, overall the CFPR programme appears to have helped to achieve a significant improvement in sustainable food availability.

### Self-Perception on Poverty

When the perception of the poverty status among the participants was explored in 2010, 67 per cent believed that their economic status had improved, 23.48 per cent believed that their poverty status remained same as in 2002 and 9.52 per cent mentioned that their poverty level had increased. These measures indicate that although the programme had a significant impact on reducing poverty among a majority of the participants some participants did not experience poverty reduction.



### Ability to Manage Crisis

The members were asked about the change in their ability to manage crisis by 2010. Of the total participants, 57 per cent said that they have achieved the ability to manage short term crises such as death of poultry or livestock, theft, and destruction of their house by storms (to some extent). Only 10 per cent of the participants indicated that they did not gain the ability to face and manage crises. This data matched with that of income improvement, suggests that the improvement in their income made the participants more confident towards crisis management.

### Self Confidence on Enterprise Development

The programme participants were asked specific questions to measure their self-confidence as entrepreneurs. Among all participants 58.3 per cent were confident that they can run their existing business properly (Among this 58.3 per cent, 45.9 per cent were confident of expanding their existing business). Additionally, 34.6 per cent were confident of creating and running a new business. These responses indicated that the programme participants had experienced significant improvements in their livelihood and became increasingly confident in operating businesses. It appears that the training provided by the programme and their experience as participants helped them to develop this confidence. Relatively the small percentage of respondents (7.1 per cent) showing lack of confidence in developing a new enterprise may be due to lack of training and experience in starting a new business.

### Future Planning of Income Generating Activities

In 2010, that is, three years after completion of the programme, 65 per cent of the programme participants had clearly set out their future planning for income generating activities such as buying land for growing vegetables, increasing the size of their poultry and livestock, buying a rickshaw for one of the male members of the family, and starting a small/micro business such as sewing traditional garments. The future planning by the programme participants suggested that they had experienced improvements in income, cash savings and self-confidence. The data showed that the percentage of members having a future plan matches closely with that of improvements for income in group and improved confidence within the group.

Table 7. 2 Impact of CFPR micro-financing programme on poverty reduction: Findings

Indicators	Pre-CFPR (2001)	During CFPR (2002-2007)	Post-CFPR (2010)
<i>Income Change</i>		Showed an improvement during 2002 to 2007	Sustained improvement in the income (57 per cent)  Could not show a sustained improvement (33.3 per cent)
<i>Occupation Change</i>	Main occupation: day-wage labourer (55 per cent)	By 2007 day wage labourer dropped to 35 per cent  Poultry rearing or cow rearing as the main occupation (25 per cent of members)  Poultry rearing firm or cow firm as supporting income source (30 per cent)	Cow and poultry rearing as a supporting occupation dropped to 30 per cent  New occupation emerged - 'own agriculture' (25 per cent)
<i>Child Labour</i>	33.3 per cent among the beneficiary households	Reduced gradually between 2002 and 2007	Only 4.76 per cent by 2010
<i>Food Security</i>	All selected households were experiencing deficiency	By 2007 significant reduction in food deficiency as severe food deficiency of	Overall ability for food consumption has increased (it was never deficit)

		more than once or twice a week was much less compared to 2002	
<b><i>Housing Condition</i></b>		All programme participants had to share rooms	All programme participants managed to build their own rooms with separate kitchen
<b><i>Toilet Facility</i></b>	All programme participants used unhygienic toilet facilities	By the end of the programme about 85 per cent of households had hygienic toilet facilities	
<b><i>Cash Savings</i></b>	All selected households had no cash savings at all	Due to compulsory saving rule, the participants had some savings	Showed some financial savings
<b><i>Asset Holdings</i></b>	Little or no asset holding	Cow ownership was 5 per cent. The poultry and goat ownership was 40 per cent.	Cow ownership increased to 75per cent. Poultry and goat ownership also increased to 80 per cent.
<b><i>Self Perception on Food Security</i></b>	Deficiency in food consumption was 85.71 per cent	Even by 2007 some households (1 per cent) were able to have excess food supply	Deficiency in food consumption has declined to 29 per cent
<b><i>Self Perception on Poverty</i></b>			67 per cent believed their economic status

			has improved, 23.48 per cent believed that their poverty status remained same as in 2002 and 9.52 per cent felt their poverty level has increased.
<i>Ability to Manage Crisis</i>			57 per cent said that they achieved the ability to manage short term crisis such as death of poultry or livestock, theft, and destruction of their house by storms. Only 10 per cent of the participants said that they did not gain ability to face and manage crisis
<i>Self Confidence on Enterprise Development</i>			58.3 per cent were confident of running the existing business properly, 45.9 per cent were confident of expanding the existing business, Only 34.6 per cent were confident of creating and running a new business.
<i>Future Planning of Income</i>			65per cent of the programme

<i>Generating Activities</i>			participants have clear future plans such as buying land for growing vegetables, increasing poultry and livestock, buying a rickshaw and starting a small/micro business such as sewing traditional garments.
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Source: Compiled from the primary data collected for the study

**TRAJECTORIES OF SOCIO ECONOMIC CHANGES (WITH POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE OUTCOME**

The trajectories of socio economic changes (both positive and negative) experienced by the participants over a eight year period that is, between 2002 (starting of the CFPR programme) and 2010 (when we completed this study), were explored through oral history accounts. Individual interviews and detailed oral historic accounts were gathered from 8 cases out of the twenty one participating households surveyed. These accounts generated qualitative information that indicated the reasons why the changes experienced were different among the participating households. That is, they showed the key factors that contributed to success or failure in producing significant change in the livelihood of participant households. Figure 7.5 illustrates trajectories of socio economic changes which led to positive or negative outcome towards poverty reduction.

Factors such as proper planning, strong motivation and hard work were found to be the main reasons for improving the economic conditions of the household and to achieve success, apart from keen interest in the occupation (i.e. selected enterprise). Furthermore, harmony in the family was another important factor which came out in the oral accounts that could determine the success or failure. That is, good cooperation among family members of the participant households in maintaining the asset provided resulted in success, while lack of cooperation among family members or presence of a sick family member or partner could lead to failure in achieving any positive improvement in the economic conditions of the participant

households. This is exemplified by the experiences of Nurunnahar and Najma (two programme participants of the programme). While Nurunnahar succeeded even without a husband due to family cooperation, planning and hard work, Najma failed even though her husband was there but was not cooperative. According to Nurunnahar, *“The assets from BRAC helped me a lot. When my husband left me, sometimes I thought how I am going to survive. But with the support of other family members and hard work, now I can maintain my family properly”* (Interview July, 2010). On the other hand, Najma said, *“If my husband was cooperative, I wouldn’t have to suffer. The economic condition was rising. But my husband was a drug addict who created pressure on me for money and I had to give him money whenever he wanted. My husband’s behaviour was a great obstacle towards success”* (Interview, July, 2010).

**Figure 5: Trajectories of the Success & Failure Cases Under CFPR Microfinancing Programme**

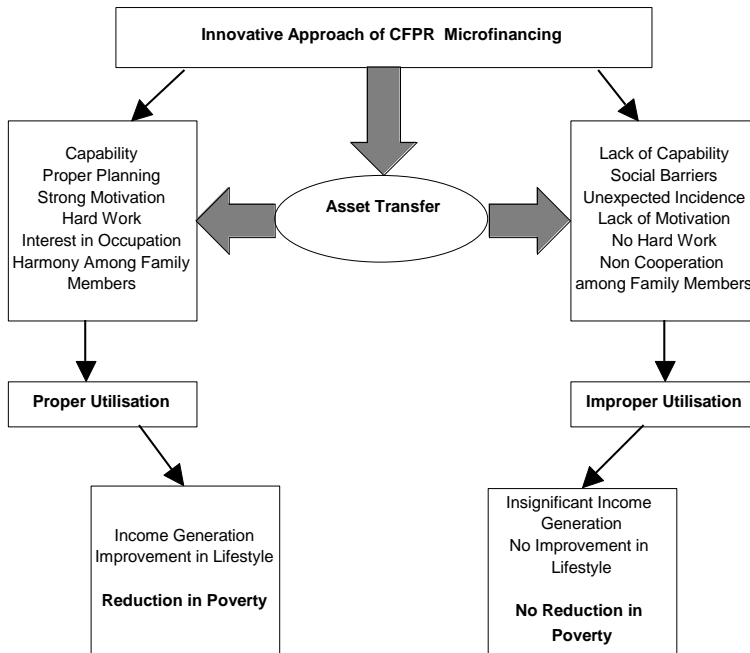


Figure 7.5 Trajectories of the success and failure cases under CFPR micro-financing programme (Figure 5 in original paper).

(Developed by authors)

Social barriers or unexpected occurrences such as non-cooperation from the other family members, and unexpected accidents in the household could pose serious obstacles for achieving success. However, it was evident that they could be overcome by strong determination, integrity, labour and hard work. For example, although Arjina faced problems in developing her microenterprise, she was able to overcome these and was successful. She said, *“The situation was not so favourable for me and I could not do so well at the start. But I worked hard to make it a success and I am happy with my present condition. Now I take three meals a day and I can provide good meals to my daughter”*. Further, social barriers can lead to failure of a microfinance participant, even when he/she works hard. Accounts of all the success cases highlighted how the role of hard work and planning of the participant played an important role in their success.

The CFPR participants were able to upgrade and enhance their skills further through recurrent schemes. That is, at the end of the two year CFPR programme the successful programme participants were provided with opportunities to participate in the mainstream development programmes of BRAC, which aimed to enhance skills and capabilities or diversify skills to participate in the credit market. More than two thirds of the CFPR members participated in the main micro-financing schemes of BRAC and those who participated more than once in these schemes were found to have used the loans for productive purposes like running own small enterprises (Raniya et al., 2010). Furthermore, the recipients also got opportunities to gain additional skills through accessing intervention services of BRAC such as health care, human rights awareness and legal aid (BRAC, 2013).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study of CFPR microfinance programme in Bangladesh set out to examine the impact of micro-financing through asset transfer instead of cash credit as a tool of social innovation and reducing poverty. It examined the reasons and factors that contributed to either positive impact or little or no impact on the poverty level of the households' participating. Previous studies have compared the participant households of CFPR programmes with the households which were not part of the programme and concluded that there was significant improvement in the livelihood of most of the programme participants of CFPR. However, a gap was observed in this analysis, as they failed to explain why some households of CFPR programme did not experience significant socio-economic improvement while others have witnessed such improvement. Therefore, this study selected a sample of both success and failure cases of households participating in the CFPR programme and examined the status and experience of the sample households during three different phases: 2002 (pre- CFPR) 2007 (end of CFPR) and 2010 (post- CFPR).

First, we examined how effective the CFPR programme is in promoting social innovation to reduce poverty by employing the following indicators to analyse the data gathered from twenty one sample households: income change, occupation change, child labour, food security, housing condition, toilet facility, cash savings, asset holdings, self-perception on food security, self-perception on poverty, ability to manage crises, self-confidence on enterprise development, and future planning of income generating activities. We found that nearly all indicators showed there had been significant improvements among the sample households. For example, the income data for more than half the participants indicated a high rate of sustainable and improved income. It was also evident that child labour in the households was reduced and running a small/micro enterprise became the alternative income source (e.g. poultry rearing, cow rearing, working in own agriculture land). According to the food security data all the households which previously had a deficiency in food



consumption experienced improvements in their conditions, and more than half of the participants did not experience any deficiency of food after the participating in the programme. In other words, the programme promoted social innovation by creating social and economic values, fostering microenterprises, creating food security, fostering inclusive growth, and also empowering women among the ultra-poor in Bangladesh.

The trajectories of socio-economic changes in the livelihood of sample participants from 2002 to 2010 revealed a number of factors that contributed to either success or failure of the programme participants. The successful cases demonstrated that hard work, strong motivation, matching of interest of the person and the selected enterprise, proper asset management, harmony among family members and appropriate planning were the main factors behind their success. They experienced significant improvement in their economic conditions and poverty reduction. On the other hand, the households that showed, lack of motivation and hard work, and a mismatch between the interest of the person and the selected enterprise, non-cooperation among family members, and social barriers, resulted in negative outcomes and the households failed to experience poverty reduction.

The findings from our case can be related to Amartya Sen's approach of capability, where we can compare the capabilities of women participating in the programme as factors that enhanced *functioning* which led to their well-being in the case of the successful ones. It is evident that the assets and training transferred by CFPR have increased their *functioning*, based on their capabilities and ended towards positive utility (poverty reduction). That is, the special or innovative approach of micro-financing by CFPR provided training along with assets transfer to the programme participants, which helped to bring out and enhance their skills and capabilities. On the other hand, the *functioning* did not go in a positive direction in the case of programme participants who showed lack of capabilities despite training and transfer of assets. However, we can't draw simple conclusions regarding this group, as there were some social barriers (conversion factors in the view of CA) which restricted their capabilities. Therefore, this segment calls for further research with a larger sample.

The innovative approach to micro-financing by the CFPR, that is, assets transfer along with training instead of cash, has proved largely effective as a tool for poverty reduction by increasing the income, food consumption, cash savings and asset holdings, and improving housing conditions of the programme participants. By training the programme participants enabled them to manage the assets with continued support during the post-asset transfer period and helping them to generate income, the programme participants' confidence as entrepreneurs can be developed. The empirical evidence from the study suggests that if there was an option that only those participants who could prove themselves as promising entrepreneurs would receive micro-financing support, then the rate of success cases would have increased significantly. It is possible to determine the working capacity,

interest in the selected enterprise and planning ability of the potential programme participants through systematic and strong monitoring during the training period. This does not mean that the weak and unsuccessful members identified during the training period should be excluded from micro-financing programme. If they are excluded this segment of ultra-poor will be totally deprived from the opportunity to improve their economic condition by accessing micro-financing. Rather, it is recommended that this group should be identified and separated during the training period and be provided with more awareness, motivation and focused training. This may help them to understand their short comings and help them to build up their capabilities, self-confidence and become successful entrepreneurs.

Despite the limitation of a relatively small size sample used, we believe that our study has made important contributions to the literature on micro-financing of the ultra-poor households in the developing countries (both conceptually and empirically). In addition, it highlighted some suggestions for policy makers and practitioners in designing and implementing appropriate micro-financing programmes that can both help produce high success rates in transforming the livelihoods of ultra-poor through social innovation.

## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

This study has offered a critical examination of the function and effectiveness of social safety nets in enhancing livelihood improvement for women and implicitly development in Bangladesh. It has attempted to embed the individual assessment of poverty reduction programmes working in the form of SSNs. This has been done by exploring the gaps existing between the strategic objectives of SSNs and the actual development outcomes. The study has argued that the outcome of SSNs in promoting development can be understood through analysing the interaction between the SSNs and targeted women by exploring their potential of increased agency.

Food security was selected as an essential component of development and the study focused on how SSNs contribute to the provision of food security of the vulnerable. In this way, it has fulfilled the main objective of contributing to a partial understanding of the role of SSNs in development. The findings therefore have significant implications for social science research, particularly development studies, its related disciplines and interdisciplinary subfields.

The research adopted an overall framework of the Human Development Approach (HDA) to analyse poverty perspectives. At the centre of academic debate has been the contention on whether inequality is a cause of poverty or poverty is a symptom of lack of economic growth or redistribution by the state. This study synthesises these two debates by utilising HDA to view development as well-being while considering expansion of the economy as a means of development.

HDA considers people as wealth and views development as a process of enabling people to flourish in various and creative ways (Alkire, 2010, p.23). Thus development is seen a process leading to an increase of people's well-being. This perspective incorporates the idea of Sen's capability approach and distinguishes between two sides of human development namely formation of human capabilities and the use of these acquired capabilities for valuable *functioning*. Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach was also utilised to a lesser degree in analysing responses to deprivation and poverty from a gender perspective. The discussion included the application of capabilities and its use towards development outcomes (functioning). Therefore, the attention was on women as agents of change and how women can cause and maintain positive development outcomes (described in chapter 1 and 2).

According to Sen (2001, p.474) *“The expansion of capabilities not only enhances women's own freedom and well-being, it also has many other effects on the lives of all. An enhancement of women's active agency can contribute substantially to the*

*lives of men as well as women, children as well as adults...*” Along these lines this thesis considers poverty as an obstacle of development and treats it as capability deprivation. This way it supports the notion of Sen and considers development as people’s ability to increase their capabilities to earn real freedom and achieve their valued well-being through increased agency. As the study concentrates on deprivation it takes poor women as representatives of this segment and proposes that the active agency of women can rectify inequalities and promote well-being by empowering them.

### **Reflection on theoretical and empirical evidence**

The focus of the thesis considered SSNs as poverty reduction programmes and as representatives of the government social policies and examined the contribution of SSNs to development. This was done by utilising the capability approach as the guiding theory. The capability approach was interpreted under the prospective framework which enabled the study to explore the means and causes of capability expansion.

It used a mixed method approach where both qualitative and quantitative analyses were applied to explore the problem. The qualitative methods used were questionnaires, interviews, observations and oral accounts of the targeted women. The quantitative method used interviews to acquire data from 300 women based on questionnaires and analysed the issue by descriptive statistics and ordered probit model.

The overall objective of the thesis was to find answer to the research question: - **How effective are social safety nets in improving livelihoods, food security and capabilities of poor distressed women in Bangladesh?**

Additionally the study sought to answer four specific sub-questions which guided the overall research problem: (1) How do SSNs plan and implement interventions to promote higher levels of food security? (2) What is the present food security status of women participating in VGD and which socio economic factors contribute to their food insecurity status? (3) What type of coping mechanisms do vulnerable women adapt in securing themselves with food during shock or crisis periods? And, (4) How can innovative approaches make SSNs more effective? In proceeding towards the findings of the study the intention was to give an understanding of exploring the socio economic context and policy trends of Bangladesh.

The study addressed the first specific question by exploring the existing literature on SSNs in the country (in chapter four). Before analysing the food security targeted SSNs, the prevailing scenario of poverty and challenges to ensuring food security was identified. The role of SSNs in ensuring food security was then explored. It analysed the role of SSNs for provision of food security by applying the

capability approach. It targeted three major components of the approach (capability, functioning and freedom) in exploring the role of SSNs. The findings provided an understanding of the implementation mode of SSNs and the challenges of ensuring food security by the public sector in the country. In addition it revealed critical views of the programmes' operational processes. The empirical chapter concluded by suggesting that expanding capabilities of the targeted population by SSNs can play a positive role towards ensuring food security of the vulnerable parts of the population.

Chapter four focused on the existing gaps between the targeted SSNs planning and implementation. In addition the chapter presented the CFPR programme (targeting for expansion of capabilities) as an effective programme. This empirical chapter created the background for exploring how these SSNs are contributing to food security in reality. The second empirical chapter five explored the contribution of VGD by exploring the food security status of participating women.

Therefore chapter five sought to answer the second research query - What is the present food security status of women participating in VGD and which socio economic factors contribute to their food insecurity status? This chapter was based on primary data collected from 300 VGD participating women. VGD is the largest, longest and one of the oldest SSNs in Bangladesh working to provide food security. This analysis was based on a quantitative exploration which indicated the food security status of participating women. As the women were at the last stage (one and a half year completed among a total duration of two years) of the programme, the statistics shed light on the impact of VGD on food security of the women. The descriptive statistics provided the figures and percentages of food secure and insecure women participating in the SSN (VGD). Furthermore the statistical analysis based on econometric modelling explored the socio economic factors affecting women's food security status.

This exploration showed that seventy six per cent of the women were able to have three meals most of the days during the period of enrolment in VGD. However, twenty four per cent of VGD participants were still food insecure. The findings also indicated that although they were having three meals, seventy five per cent of these women ate less amounts of food due to food scarcity. This exploration challenges the position of VGD as a *Social protection - food security programme*.

The next part of the analysis showed the socio-economic factors related with food security. It was observed that employment status, purchasing power, number of dependant family members and education are all related factors with food security. Low or unskilled education and unemployment act as a barrier to food security. Hence, it can be concluded that education and employment are important components for ensuring food security.

This way education and employment are identified as contributors of capability expansion in this research. Therefore, the above findings support the notion that empowerment is necessary for the provision of food security of women. This finding was strengthened by interviewing a sample group and conducting in-depth qualitative studies to address the third question - What type of coping mechanisms do vulnerable women adapt in securing themselves with food during shock or crisis periods? A group of 23 women participating in the SSN (VGD) were selected in order to analyse their livelihood, coping strategies during shocks and their perceptions of the SSN. This way the study offered an understanding of the coping strategies of women during crisis periods. In addition the study came up with an understanding of the perception of the participating women regarding the relevance of SSNs. This helped to discover the gaps according to the participant women present in government SSNs operations in relation to the expectations of the programme participants (Chapter six).

The findings of this qualitative exploration indicate that women employ both problem and emotionally focused coping styles in severe crisis periods. To cope with crises women adopt their own coping mechanisms to generate income and acquire food for the family. Besides, for these women VGD enrolment was also an instrument for coping in managing food security during crises periods. The additional exploration on the perception of women in relation to the programme indicated dissatisfaction with the discrepancy in resource distribution and training opportunity.

The fourth query, how can innovative approaches make SSNs more effective? was addressed by analysing a donor funded SSN (CFPR) through comparing the outcome of two different programme approaches (the government operating VGD and NGO operating CFPR) working under common objectives. This exploration was based on a qualitative analysis. Data was gathered from twenty one households to find out the programme impact on different livelihood strategies such as change in income, occupation, housing condition, and source of drinking water, food consumption, asset holdings, cash savings and other items. The analysis indicated an improvement in the livelihood of majority of households. It was evident that the programme promoted the livelihood in an innovative manner by offering assets to the poor. Moreover, implementing the programme in accordance with the plan gave rise to micro enterprises by capable micro entrepreneurs supporting with training.

The next step of the analysis covered in-depth observations of eight households to explore the trajectories of socio economic changes. Households improving their livelihood demonstrated hard work, strong motivation and harmony among the family members as components of their success. On the other hand, providing appropriate assets according to participant's interest indicated the institutional capacity of successful programme implementation. The qualitative research on the

CFPR programme highlighted suggestions for policy makers and practitioners in designing and implementing appropriate and effective poverty reduction programmes (described in chapter seven).

The above findings from the specific research questions on challenges and problems existing in programme operations and the social context affecting or creating the gap inspired the study to suggest the rethinking of strategic planning and operation.

There appeared to be too many and conflicting SSNs working with the same objective of reducing poverty and ensuring food security for the vulnerable parts of the population. Bangladesh is a country of low income and deprivation. Though having a steady annual growth rate of between 4 to 6 per cent since 2002, the poverty rate of the country is currently 31.5 per cent with a high poverty gap. High inequality has been identified as the main reason for this poverty gap. Inequalities exist in income, health, employment, political sector and access to land and resources. Moreover, cultural and social practices have given rise to gender inequality. Social practices, customary rules and traditions boost gender discrimination and deprive women in the society. These trends hinder women's access to land, education, health facilities and employment and increase their vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity.

While short term SSNs in the country protect vulnerable women from immediate shocks, the long term SSNs comprise are both protective and promotional in nature. This is evident from programme planning which aims to ensure food security, increase income and minimize deprivation. In exploring the planning and operation of these long term SSNs this study found inconsistencies between programme planning and implementation. These inconsistencies often obscure the main objective of programme outputs. The programmes output indicated that they made food available for the deprived women during the programme operation period but unfortunately could not show evidence of ensuring sustainability in the availability and access of food. The findings showed that the women articulated and managed their own strategies to fight poverty and food insecurity and in most cases recycled pre-programme strategies. The women's strategies focused on both problem and emotional stress release. Acquiring food for the family was the main priority in crisis times. Joining 'any type of job' and reducing the expenditure on food by skipping meals or selecting alternative low cost food indicate hardship in life. In many cases the rate of children dropping out of schools and consequently being forced into the informal sector employment illuminate the women's struggle for survival and problem-focused coping strategies. On the other hand the women's emotional coping strategies with the hardship by crying, praying and singing show their mental ability in adapting to the situation.

Therefore, the existing SSNs still act only as a protective and almost emergency programme. Though having components of a promotional nature in programme description, a lack in institutional capacity (corruption and lack of transparency) create a difference between the programme objective and output. Moreover, empirical explorations indicate scarcity in availability and access to food among the deprived population during their participation in government operated food security ensuring programmes from chapter five. Furthermore, the thesis identified socio economic factors such as lack of education, employment, income, expenditure on food and women's lack of empowerment as obstacles to food security.

Comparing government and non-government programme operations reveal better results in NGO operated programmes. One reason for this can be related to the direct provision of assets for income generating activities along with practical hands-on training. The combination of resource provision with training on how to utilise the provided resources helped the targeted women in making a sustainable improvement in well-being, functioning and real freedom.

The analysis targeting the four specific research questions facilitated this research in exploring the overall query - **How effective are social safety nets in improving livelihoods, food security and capabilities of poor distressed women in Bangladesh?**

The thesis analysed SSNs effectiveness (by focusing on VGD and CFPR) on improving distressed women's livelihood and food security status by expanding their capabilities. It was mentioned earlier (in chapter 2) that livelihood can be sustainable *“when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future”* (Scoones in Krantz, 2001, p.1). The findings based on the four research specific questions provide an opportunity to understand the effectiveness of SSNs impact on improving livelihoods through capability expansion. The exploration comprises evidence on SSNs role on enhancing the food security status of distressed women. Moreover it identified socio economic factors relating to their food security status and their coping strategies during shock period. All together the findings reflect the effectiveness of SSNs in contributing towards distressed women's well-being by expanding their capabilities. In addition the findings of the fourth specific query highlight suggestions in designing and implementing appropriate and effective poverty reduction programmes.

This part of the discussion inspires the research to revisit the definitions of development. According to HDI

*“The real objective of development should be to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.”*



(UNDP, 2014, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/understanding/indices>).

This indicates that HDI concentrates on human centred development. A human centred development has three goals: meeting survival needs, adopting necessary means for human security and reducing dependent relationships. SSNs targeting females are resource providers working with the intension of empowering women by enhancing access to resources and expanding their agency for capability expansion (see chapter six).

Poverty reduction programmes can work towards capability expansion.<sup>85</sup> SSNs targeted at ensuring food security cover the two goals of meeting basic survival needs and security improvement. This research concentrated on two poverty reduction SSNs. VGD which is a government programme aimed at ensuring food security by meeting the survival needs and, CFPR a NGO operated programme aimed at providing assets for the generation income and making women secure from hunger. Additionally, the objective of developing women's skills through training was incorporated in both of the programmes in order to develop their income generating skills and empower them by reducing dependency. The two SSNs were therefore an example of poverty reduction programmes for human centred development.

The findings from the empirical analysis provided valuable information on how the SSNs are contributing to human development. Furthermore, the evidence from the analysis provided information on the gaps in programme operation. While VGD showed a lack in institutional capacity, CFPR showed a strong institutional capacity for implementing such programmes. But still there was evidence of households that were unable to achieve the desired success. The pathways to success and little or no success explained the importance of the role of women participating in the programmes. It highlighted that women themselves should acquire the motivation to work as agents of change. This motivation can be enhanced by developing their responsibility. In Sen's words:

*"The argument for social support in expanding peoples freedom can, therefore be seen as an argument for individual responsibility, not against it. The linkage between freedom and responsibility works both ways. Without substantive freedom and capability to do something, a person cannot be responsible for doing it. But actually having the freedom and capability to do something does impose on the person the duty to consider whether to do it or not, and this does involve individual responsibility. In this sense, freedom is both necessary and sufficient for responsibility"* (Sen, 2010, p.284).

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<sup>85</sup> See "Relating development concepts with capability approach" in chapter 2.

The empirical analysis employed the capability approach (CA) as the guiding theory. Applying CA enabled the research to observe women's doings and beings. While paying attention to economic status or resource provision of the women it also observed the capability of women towards functioning. Hence, the analysis became more dependable since focusing on resource provision alone could be misleading in analysing the well-being of women. Observing capability expansion provided more space for understanding women's livelihood which improved the real picture of their well-being. On the other hand focusing on freedom gave the opportunity to observe women's agency and empowerment.

The main criticism of Sen's CA argued a need for a coherent list of capability sets (Williams, 1987, p.96; Nussbaum, 1988, p.176; Qizilbash, 1998, p. 54). Nussbaum supporting this critic developed a list of *Central human capabilities*. In addition to Sen's CA this study also utilised Nussbaum's approach for analysing Nussbaum's claim about the capabilities approach being fully universal and that states should enclose the *Central human capabilities* in their constitution by analysing the constitution of Bangladesh (Chapter 6). Observing specific articles of the constitution (Article 10, 15 (b), 19(1), (2), 28, 36, 39 and 42) provided an impression that important capabilities of Nussbaum's list (as *affiliation and control over one's environment*) has been incorporated in the constitution. But due to lack in institutional capacity the provisions were not contributing as effective means of capability expansion (described in details in chapter 6). Therefore, this study argues that by only incorporating capability sets in the constitution cannot expand human capability and therefore cannot ensure well-being. Therefore, the study acknowledges Sen's flexible framework of CA (without any specified listed capabilities) acknowledging the contextuality and the fact that capability selection depends on an individual's or society's value judgment.

Unavailability of reliable government data can be mentioned as a challenge in the study. It was hard to explore the coordination between government and non-government sectors development programme operations due to lack of data. It was clearly visible from the literatures and major findings from this study that there are overlapping programmes operating under the same objective. Hence proper coordination is important to avoid overlapping. It would have been possible to identify these gaps more clearly if the data were available. This study also supports the notion of Rahman (2013) that SSN operations by the government exhibit a disharmony in their coordination among each other and with NGOs and proposes to establish one coordinating unit either in a ministry or department for planning and implementation of social policies including SSNs.

### **The emerging puzzle for future study**

As a concluding remark it seems that a puzzle has emerged. What is the goal of poverty reduction programmes? Are they supposed to promote economic growth along with valuable functioning of people? And lastly, can economic growth ensure well-being in itself?

Theoretically, both human development and capability approaches see poverty reduction programmes as mechanisms for development since they aim to protect people from the poverty trap and to empower them. Therefore aim at both poverty reduction and sustainable well-being. The theoretical consideration of this research focused on people's well-being and suggested this to be the main indicator of development. It identified real freedom (through agency) as an essential element in the development process. This approach criticises the conventional economic growth centred ideology and suggested that well-being as an essential component along with poverty reduction should complement economic wealth creation. It highlighted the importance of capability expansion through the empowerment of women's agency by more focus on important capabilities such as education, employment, security and real freedom. Moreover, the study emphasised the need for more transparent and effective coordination and administration in poverty reduction programmes in order to achieve sustainable well-being.

The research critically focused on the role of poverty reduction programmes for development using the human development and capability approach. The study contributed to the literature in the field of development studies through reflecting on the gaps in strategic operations and lack of institutional capacities to improve the livelihood of the deprived population and incorporating their views. By concentrating on the operational mechanisms the study partially overlooked the obstacles or challenges that institutions face while implementing the programmes in reality. Therefore, a systematic inquiry on first, what forces affect the planning process and second, what challenges the institutions face in implementing these strategies needs to be addressed for a better understanding of the gaps identified in the research. A final remark connected to those issues is the fact that SSNs are dealing with the symptoms of poverty and not the causes. This way SSNs are subordinated to macro social policies like job creation, land reform and other issues related to redistribution.





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# APPENDICES

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# Appendix A. Research questionnaire used for exploring food security of VGD women and associated socio economic factors

This questionnaire has been developed to collect data from the beneficiaries of the anti-poverty programme. This research is carried out for the fulfilment of PhD degree under the department of Political Science of Aalborg University, Denmark. The main objective of this data collection is to explore a model of effective anti-poverty programme operation for the provision of food security of women. The collected data will be used entirely for academic purpose and the responses will be kept confidentially. I therefore, request you to spare some time and answer the following questions.

Thank you.

1. Name of the beneficiary \_\_\_\_\_
2. Address \_\_\_\_\_
3. Contact phone number (if any)  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PART 1

### (A) Demographic and Social Information

*Please give a tick (✓) mark where you think is applicable.*

#### 1. Marital status-

- 1.Married
- 2.Unmarried
3. Divorced
4. Widow

#### 2. Religion-

1. Muslim
- 2.Hindu
- 3.Christian
- 4.Buddist
- 5.Other

**3. Ethnicity-**

1. Bengali
2. Bihari
3. Tribal
4. Other

**4. Education of the beneficiary**

0. None
1. Primary
2. Secondary
3. Above Secondary

**5. Husbands education**

1. None
2. Primary
3. Secondary
4. Above Secondary

**6. Main source of household income-**

1. Agriculture
2. Wage labour
3. Petty tred
4. Self-employment
5. Service
6. Begger
7. Other -----

**7. Employment status (self)**

1. Employed
2. Un employed

**8. If employed (occupation)-**

1. day labour
2. housemaid
3. garments worker
4. beggar
5. other
6. not applicable

**9. Employment status (husband)**

1. Employed
2. Un employed
3. Dead
4. Separated

**10. If employed.....What type**

1. Agriculture
2. Day labour
3. Petty tred
4. self employed
5. service
6. beggar
7. other
8. not applicable

**11. Employment status (Other members)**

1. Employed
2. Un employed

**12. If employed- Who**

1. Self
2. husband
3. adult son
4. adult daughter
5. none

**13. Type of Employment-**

1. agriculture
2. day labour
3. petty tred
4. self employed
5. begging
6. service
7. other
8. not applicable-

**14. Monthly Income (self)**

1. Cash
2. Food

3. Cash and food

**15. Monthly Income (Husband)**

0. Cash
1. Food
2. not applicable

**16. Monthly Income from other members**

0. Cash
1. Food
2. not applicable

**17. Monthly expenditure**

17.1 Food amount-

17.2 Other amount-

**18. No of dependant in the family ( non- income earners)**

0. 1-2
1. 3-4
2. 5 and above
3. Not applicable

**19. Number of total family members**

1. 2
2. 3
3. 4
4. 5
5. 5+
6. Alone herself

**20. Number of children -**

1. None
2. 1
3. 2
4. 3
5. 4
6. 4+

**21. Age of children (year)-**

1. 0-5
2. 6-10
3. 11-15
4. 16-20
5. 20+
6. not applicable

**22. Home ownership-**

1. Own
2. Rented
3. Other ( Please Specify)

**23.Housing Condition-**

1. Pucca (Brick Build)
2. Semi Pucca (Brick wall with Tin Roof)
3. Kancha ( Straw/soil and Tin )
4. Other

**23. Toilet facility -TF**

1. Hygenic
2. Non hygienic

**Household Food Security related questions**

<u>No</u>		<u>Response</u>
B1	How often did you eat three 'square meals' (full stomach meals) a day in the past 12 months (not a festival day)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mostly (3 meals each day)</li> <li>2. Often (3 at least a few times each week)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (3 per day 7-12 times this year)</li> <li>4. Rarely (3 per day only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>5. Never</li> </ol>
B2	In the last 12 months, how often did you or any of your family have to eat wheat (or another grain) although you wanted to eat rice (not including when you were sick)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (most days/weeks)</li> </ol>

B3	In the last 12 months how often did <i>you yourself</i> skip	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> </ol>
B4	In the past 12 months how often did <i>you</i> personally eat less food in a meal due to scarcity of food?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (most days/weeks)</li> </ol>
B5	In the past 12 months how often did food stored in your home run out and there was no money to buy more that day?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (most days/weeks)</li> </ol>
B6	In the past 12 months how often did you worry about where food would come from? ( <i>Mathar bhitre koto chinta</i> from food or money worries).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (most days/weeks)</li> </ol>
B7	In the past 12 months, how often did your family purchase rice?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (once every few months last year)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (a few times each month)</li> </ol>
B8	In the past 12 months how often did <u>your family</u> take <u>food</u> (rice, lentils etc.) on credit (or loan) from a local shop?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (this happens a lot)</li> </ol>
B9	In the past 12 months how often did <u>your family</u> have to borrow food from relatives or neighbours to make a meal?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Rarely (only 1-6 times this yr)</li> <li>3. Sometimes (7-12 times this yr)</li> <li>4. Often (a few times each month)</li> <li>5. Mostly (this happens a lot)</li> </ol>

**(C) Eating and cooking pattern**

**C1. What do the members of your household eat on a typical day? DIET**

- 1) Rice /Bread
- 2) Rice/Bread + Vegetable
- 3) Rice/Bread + Veg+ fish/meat
- 4) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**C2. From where do you generally get the food you eat? FSRC**

- 1) Produce
- 2) Produce+ buy
- 3) Buy
- 4) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**C3. Who buys the food? BUY**

- 0) Man
- 1) Women

**C4. Who decides 'what to buy'? DECBUY**

- 0) Man
- 1) Women

**C5. What is the source of the water you drink? - SW**

- 1) Tube well
- 2) Supply water
- 3) Well
- 4) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**C6. Who prepares the food for the household?- FP**

1. Adult female of the household
2. Adult male of the household
3. Both
4. Other ( Please specify)

**C7. Who decides 'what to cook'?- DECC**

- 0) Man
- 1) Women

**C8. After preparing the meal how do you take it?**

1. Together all members
2. Separately

**C9. If separately,**

- Who takes the meal first?
- Please give a sequence of the persons taking the meal
  1. Man, Children, Women
  2. Man, Women, Children
  3. Children, Man, Women
  4. Children, Women, Man
  5. Women, Man, Children
  6. Women, Children, Man
  7. Not applicable

**C10. Does everyone eat the same food?**

1. Yes
2. No

**C11. If 'No' - Please elaborate**

1. Left over food
2. Children takes special food
3. Not applicable

**C12. Who do you think needs the highest amount of food? Why?**

1. Man
2. Women
3. Children
4. old member
5. Other (Please specify)

**C13. WHY? ...**

1. Because he is the head
2. Because S/he is working
3. They are growing
4. They are student
5. Main earner of the family
6. Woman needs more food than man
7. Old people needs to eat more



## **Appendix B. Research questionnaire to explore managing food during crisis, coping mechanisms and women's perception of VGD programme**

### **Research Questionnaire**

This questionnaire has been developed to collect data from the participants of the poverty reduction programme. This research is carried out for the fulfilment of PhD degree under the department of Political Science of Aalborg University, Denmark. The main objective of this data collection is to explore a model of effective poverty reduction programme operation for the provision of food security of women. The collected data will be used entirely for academic purpose and the responses will be kept confidentially. I therefore, request you to spare some time and answer the following questions.

Thank you.

**4. Name of the participant women**

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Contact phone number (if any)**

\_\_\_\_\_

### **(A) Anthropometric indicators**

1. **Age** \_\_\_\_\_ years

2. **Weight** \_\_\_\_\_ kg

3. **Height** \_\_\_\_\_ cm

### **(B) Coping and Survival Strategies**

**1. Did you face any sort of crisis in the last one year?**

Health related

Loss of Jobs  
 Problem with housing  
 Affected by any natural disaster  
 Other.....

**2. In the time of crisis what did you do?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**3. Did you get any help during your crisis? If yes from whom?**

Yes

No

**4. If yes, from whom did you get the help?**

Neighbour

Relatives

Other NGO

Other source

Please elaborate

**5. What type of help did you receive?**

.....  
 .....

**6. When you didn't have enough money for food – did you go for an alternative meal planning?**

Yes

No

**7. If yes (please elaborate)**

**8. Did you ever have to choose an alternative between buying food and buying medicine?**

Yes

No

**9. If yes, what did you do in that situation?**

**10. To cope with the situation- what did you do?**

		Yes	No	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Reduce expenditure</b>			
	Food			
	Education			
	Medicine			

	Clothing			
	Other			
<b>2.</b>	<b>Selling Assets</b>			
	Poultry			
	Land			
	House			
	Other			
<b>3.</b>	<b>Borrowing Money from</b>			
	Relatives			
	Neighbour			
	Micro credit organisation			
	Other			

**11. Did you migrate?**

Yes

No

**12. Where?**

Nearest city

Capital city

Nearest Village

Relative's house

Other

**(C) Gender Related**

**1. Who is the most important person in your family?**

a) Man

b) Women

c) Children

d) Other (Please specify)

WHY?

**2. Who is the main decision provider of your family regarding-  
Income distribution-**

Husband

Wife

Other

**Food Planning (buying, meal planning, distribution)**

Husband

Wife

Other

**Asset purchase**

Husband

Wife

Other

**Children's welfare ( schooling, health etc)**

Husband

Wife

Other

**(B) Do you have any asset of your own?**

Yes

No

**(C) If yes, What type?**

Productive non land assets

Land asset

Non productive assets

Financial assets (savings, fixed deposit etc)

Loans given out

Stock

Investment

**(D) Does your husband own any of the assets?**

Productive non land assets

Land asset

Non productive assets

Financial assets (savings, fixed deposit etc)

Loans given out

Stock

Investment

**(E) Do you have any liabilities?**

Yes

No

**(F) If Yes, What type**

**(G) Does your husband have any liabilities**

Yes

No

**(H) If Yes, What type**

**(I) Awareness of women rights**

Dowry is an offence-

Yes

No

Second marriage requires permission from the first wife

Yes

No

Three times saying 'TALAQ' does not mean divorce

Yes	No
Son will not inherit the whole property	
Yes	No

## **PART 2**

### **Programme Perception**

**1. How long are you a member of the programme?**

.....

**2. What are the benefits that you receive from the Programme?**

.....

**3. Did you receive any income generating training from the programme?**

Yes

No

**4. If yes, What type**

Poultry rearing

Livestock rearing

Kitchen gardening

Petty trade

Fish culture

Handicraft

Other

.....

.....

.

**5. Are you applying the acquired skill in your present life?**

Yes

No

**6. If yes, please elaborate**

.....

.....

**7. Do you think this skill helps you in earning? How?**

.....

.....

**8. Have you taken any loan from a micro-financing institution?**

Yes

No

**9. If yes-**

Amount (TK)–

Repaid (TK)

Total time of repayment

Interest rate  
Per instalment

**10. Do you think that the programme has improved your life style?**

Yes

No

**11. Why do you think like that**

.....  
.....

**12. Self-perception**

		Yes	No
1	The family needs me, I am essential for the family		
2	The neighbours need me		
3	I contribute towards the society		

**13. Do you plan for an improved time during the festival?**

		Yes	No
1	Eid –Ul Fitre		
2	Eid Ul Azha		
3	Puja		
4	X mas		
5	After harvest		
6	Election period		
7	Any Other?		

**14. What do you plan for?**

Improved meal

New clothes

Other

**15. How do you save money for this?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**16. How do you try to release your stress during the time of crisis?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**17. What suggestions do you give to improve the programme?**

## Appendix C. Research questionnaire to explore CFPR impact on participating households

Name of representative women of the household

Age

Address

Income and Employment

a. Please let me know the income (Taka) of your household?

Year 2002      ...                      ...                      ...

Year 2007      ...                      ...                      ...

Year 2010      ...                      ...                      ...

b. What is the main source of income of your family?

Year 2002      ...                      ...                      ...

Year 2007      ...                      ...                      ...

Year 2010      ...                      ...                      ...

c. What is the supporting occupation of your family?

Year 2002      ...                      ...                      ...

Year 2007      ...                      ...                      ...



Year 2010      ...                      ...                      ...

- d. Is any child member (7-15) employed in work to support the family?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
2002			
2007			
2010			

#### Food Security

- a. How many times a week do you face deficiency in the food consumption of your family?

	<b>Deficit more than 1-2 times a week</b>	<b>Deficit 1-2 times a week</b>	<b>Never Deficit</b>
2002			
2007			
2010			

- b. Sources of Water Consumed

- c. What is the source of your drinking water and the water used for cooking?

	<b>Tube well</b>	<b>well</b>	<b>Other sources</b>
2002			

2007			
2010			

### Housing Condition

- a. How many rooms are there in your house?

	<b>One room</b>	<b>Two room</b>	<b>Three room</b>	<b>No room of own</b>
2002				
2007				
2010				

- b. Do you have any separate kitchen?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2002		
2007		
2010		

### Toilet Facility

- a. What is the type of your toilet?

	<b>Hygienic</b>	<b>Un hygienic</b>
2002		

2007		
2010		

### Cash Saving

- a. Do you have any cash savings?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2002		
2007		
2010		

### Asset Owning

- a. What type of assets do you have?

Year 2002	...	...	...
Year 2007	...	...	...
Year 2010	...	...	...

### Self Perception on Food Security

- a. According to your own perception what is the condition of your food security?

	<b>Always Deficit</b>	<b>Sometimes Deficit</b>	<b>Balanced</b>	<b>Excess</b>
2002				

2007				
2010				

### Self Perception on Poverty

- a. Do you think that after participating the CFPR programme, your poverty has reduced?

Yes

☐

No, Poverty has increased

☐

Same as before

☐

### Managing Crisis

- a. After participating the programme do you think that you have gained the ability of managing crisis?

Yes

☐

No

☐

## Self Confidence

- a. Please mention your confidence level by helping me to fill the following table

	<b>Can do it (Confidently)</b>	<b>Probably can do it (Need help)</b>	<b>No, cannot do it</b>	<b>No comment</b>
Run the existing business properly				
Create a new business and run it properly				
Expand the business				
Handle disaster				
Maintain Accounts Properly				

## Future Planning

- a. Have you planned any income generating source for future?

Yes

☐

No

☐

b. If yes, please mention it

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix D. Letter from BRAC and UNO Shonargaon



**To whom it may concern**

I am happy to write a recommendation for Ms Ismat Mahmuda, who has carried out a study on the BRAC's ultra-poor programme with cooperation from the Research and Evaluation Division (RED). BRAC-RED is a multi-disciplinary research organization within the framework of BRAC and conducts research on BRAC programmes and issues related to national and international interests. BRAC-RED also welcomes researchers, students, academics to work independently using dataset generated by BRAC-RED's as well as to work in collaboration with it. BRAC-RED has generated a longitudinal panel dataset on its innovative programme "Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction-Targeting the Ultra poor (CFPR-TUP)".

BRAC-RED has permitted Ms Mahmuda to use the CFPR dataset to conduct her study on the programme impacts. Using the quantitative data, she also conducted some qualitative studies. I have taken a role as her guide in understanding the available dataset as well as to select the households for qualitative exploration. Upon selection of the households, Ms Mahmuda moved to the field location of BRAC's CPFR programme for three weeks (6-27 July, 2010) and interviewed the beneficiary households. RED also hired a research assistant to assist Ms Mahmuda during her field visit. I hope that through her extensive field work, the qualitative case studies she had done will not only serve the purpose of the study she is doing for academic purpose but also contribute towards the deeper understanding on impact pathways to RED's researchers.

I wish her all the success in her future endeavors.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Narayan Chandra Das".

Narayan Chandra Das

Research Fellow  
RED.BRAC

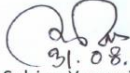
Email: narayan.cd @brac.net



**To whom it may concern**

It is a pleasure for me to certify that Ismat Mahmuda, Ph.D student of Aalborg University carried out a research on the ongoing Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme of Sonargaon Upazila. The Upazila social welfare office assisted her by providing ten social workers to carry out her research. Ismat collected data for both qualitative and quantitative research from VGD beneficiaries during June 5 to August 31, 2013. I expect that her effort will fulfil the objective of her research and provide valuable inputs not only for her study but also for the betterment of VGD as well as other related social safety nets of Bangladesh.

I wish every success in her future research.

  
31.08.2013  
Sabina Yeasmin

Upazila Nirbahi officer

Shonargaon

Phone-





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